South Haven Tribune

$3

June 7, 2026

Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Kevin Dee has served at South Haven Public Schools for 16 years and worked his way up to being the district's director of non-instructional services.

A passion for trade

Dee finds niche in non-instructional path at South Haven schools

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — From Chicago to Southwest Michigan, Kevin Dee has found a purpose serving students and staff at South Haven Public Schools.

After spending years working in maintenance and facilities management, Dee now serves as the district's director of non-instructional services, overseeing operations that help keep schools running smoothly.

Dee recently sat down with South Haven Tribune Editor Julie Newell to reflect on his life and career.

When did you move to South Haven?

We bought an old abandoned farmhouse and renovated on the weekend – so we actually moved here now about 29 years ago. We bought the house probably about 32 years ago, I think. My grandparents had a summer cottage on Haven Shores. Grandma went there in the 1920s, you know, to vacation here. So, our family spent all my summers and weekends up here growing up as a kid.

Where did you go to school?

I took a little bit of different track; my path really comes through the trade. I went to Chicago City of Colleges, for steam clad engineering, stationary engineer. I was an engineer for Chicago Public Schools. Before that I did heating and air conditioning, I worked in union air conditioning and we served as primarily Chicago Public Schools and other big, commercial and light industrial applications and working on boilers and chillers and mechanical equipment.

I was an engineer for about five years for Chicago Public Schools and then we ended up moving up here – to start our family here. I took a job up in Grandville Public Schools. I was up there for 13 years, I was a district engineer in Grandville for 13 years before coming here.

When did you start working in South Haven?

About 16 years ago now. I started out as head of maintenance, working maintenance foreman.

What is your current position?

As director of non-instructional services. It's the first job I've ever had that tells you what I don't do. It made a lot of sense. Bob Herrera, when he was superintendent, put me in this role. Carrie

See DEE, page A5

City council OKs 2026-27 fiscal budget

Beach safety plan to include lifeguards

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council approved the 2026-27 fiscal year budget this week and set the 2026 property tax millage.

The proposed budget was presented in three parts to be approved including component unit funds; general, special revenue, debt service, capital projects and fiduciary funds; as well as enterprise and internal service funds.

Council member Mary Hosley poked a few holes in the budget prior to it being approved Monday night.

"(I'm) trying to understand the continued deficits ... under the licenses and permits; under the original budget it was $982,600, under the projects it's almost $1.5 million," Hosley said. "I was wondering what the actual budget will be and whether there will be a deficit or do we need to wait until everything is reconciled in June."

City Manager Kate Hosier said Hosley's concerns are directly related to the changes in the short-term rental program.

"We are running a two-year program on a one-year budget, so we are going to have more things coming in this year," Hosier said. "Whether or not those will make it for the budget amendment on the second meeting in June, I don't know. It all depends on what comes in the door."

Beach safety

The city council approved an update to the city's beach safety plan.

"We do try to make sure that what we do have in the beach safety plan does reflect what we are doing actively out on the beaches," Hosier said.

The updates included the addition of the lifeguard program and the updated signage on the beaches.

Hosier said the plan is updated periodically as thing change.

Other items

The city council also approved the 2026 property tax millage.

The millage includes the 2026 tax rate request form because the Headlee Millage Reduction Fraction is used on the request form to reduce the millage that can be levied by multiplying it with the 2025 millage rate.

This reduces the maximum amount of millage that is allowed to be levied for the 2026 taxes and reduces the amount of millage that may be collected by a taxing jurisdiction.

Lastly, the city council approved two special events:

■ National Blueberry Festival to be held Aug. 6-9 at various locations around the city.

■ Al-Van's Furry 5K to be held from 7-11:30 a.m. on June 27, starting at Kid's Corner Park on St. Joseph Street using the Van Buren Trail.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Gordie Howe Bridge could be days away from completion, sources say

By CHAD LIVENGOOD and GRANT SCHWAB
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — The construction of the Gordie Howe International Bridge and its customs plazas in Detroit and Windsor is nearing completion, setting the stage for a potential standoff with President Donald Trump over the opening of the new Detroit River span, The Detroit News has learned.

The construction and testing of all systems at the massive $4.7 billion bridge, customs plazas and ramps connecting to Michigan and Ontario freeways could be days away from being complete, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the progress.

But the sources cautioned that a number of variables are at play as various U.S., Michigan, and Canadian government agencies grant final approvals to open the new bridge to commercial truck and passenger vehicle traffic.

Andy Morrison / The Detroit News / TNS

The sun begins to burn off low-level fog around the Gordie Howe International Bridge on Oct. 3, 2023. The bridge connecting Detroit and Ontario is nearing completion.

Then there's the Trump factor, the sources said, creating continued uncertainty of when the bridge will actually open to traffic after eight years of construction.

The U.S. president has demanded concessions from Canada in trade talks, or a share of future toll revenue, as a condition for opening the Gordie Howe Bridge. The White House ramped up its pressure in recent days amid a broader trade stalemate with Canada, demanding that substantially more U.S. content be included in Canadian- and Mexican-assembled vehicles that are exported to American car dealership lots, Reuters reported.

A Trump administration trade envoy reportedly brought that demand to negotiations this week in Mexico City over the United States-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement. Canadian officials were not present at those talks, a sign of the fractured trade relationship between Washington and Ottawa.

No approvals for the bridge to open to traffic from the Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Department of Transportation are seen as possible without the blessing of the Trump White House, the sources said. Spokespersons for the highway administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The international agency responsible for overseeing construction of the new bridge, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, has repeatedly said the Howe bridge was on track to open this spring. Three weeks remain of spring.

See BRIDGE, page A5

South Haven seeking homeowners for grant program

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The City of South Haven is now accepting applications for their Community Development Block Grant Homeowner Rehabilitation Program.

According to a news release, qualifying homes will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

"In 2025, the City of South Haven was awarded $400,000 in CDBG funding for critical home rehabilitation," the release stated. "This program is restricted to income qualified households in the City of South Haven and is intended to help homeowners make critical repairs to their home for health, safety and welfare."

This program will be managed through city staff and third-party administrator, Market One.

An informational session on the program can be viewed on the city's YouTube page.

Application are open through June 19.

Paper applications are available at City Hall, located at 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Fillable PDF applications can be submitted electronically to CDBG@marketone.org or in person at City Hall.

Additional details can be found at www.marketone.org/cdbg.

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OBITUARIES

Ellen Heinichen

Sept. 4, 1949 – May 28, 2026

Ellen Loraine Heinichen (Butler), age 76 of South Haven, Mich. passed away on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo, Mich. She was born on Sept. 4, 1949, to Lewis and Donna Butler (Wilkinson) in South Haven. She was the youngest of three children, with a brother, David and a sister, Marilyn.

Ellen grew up and lived her entire life in the Bangor/South Haven area. She graduated from Bangor High School in 1967.

Ellen was a hard worker who took pride in all her jobs, from working at Everett Piano Company to welding at Haworth and finally, following her sisters' footsteps, she became a United States postal worker, where she served as a rural route carrier until her retirement in 2019.

Ellen had three daughters to whom she devoted her time, ensuring they were always supported, happy and loved. Ellen loved watching basketball, being outdoors in warm weather, watching "her birds," going to the casino with friends, last-minute shopping trips and spending time with her two cats, Louie & Weezy. But most of all, she enjoyed being "Grandma Ellen" to her three wonderful grandchildren, Devin, Tyler, and Leeanne and her one great-grandson, Eric.

Ellen will be deeply missed by all who knew her, and they will find comfort in knowing she is now home and at peace with the Lord, her savior.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Surviving are her three daughters, Tali (Dennis) Sorenson, Holly (Todd) Mielke, and Renée (Andrew) Gossman; grandsons Devin Sorenson and Tyler (Olivia) Mielke; granddaughter Leeanne (Yamil) Mielke; and one great-grandson, Eric. Also surviving are brother David (Rita) Butler and nieces Jennifer (Tim) and Lori (Jason).

Ellen is preceded in death by her father, Lewis Butler; her mother, Donna Butler; and her sister, Marilyn Geier (Butler).

Per her wishes, cremation has taken place, and a celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Arrangements are entrusted to the Bangor Chapel of D.L. Miller Funeral Home, www.dlmillerfuneralhome.com.

Lois Roberts

July 5, 1945 – May 9, 2026

Lois Diane Roberts, born on July 5, 1945, in the charming town of South Haven, Mich., passed away peacefully on May 9, 2026. She was a beloved daughter of Clara and Curtis Rogers and a devoted mother to her surviving son, Michael Rogers.

Lois was a woman of warmth and kindness, whose life was defined by her love for family, friends, and the simple pleasures of life.

Lois Diane Roberts leaves behind a legacy of love, generosity and a deep appreciation for life's simple pleasures. Her presence will be profoundly missed by all who knew her, yet her spirit will forever remain in the hearts of those she touched.

A celebration of life for Lois will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, June 13, 2026 at the Moose Lodge, 1025 E. Wells St. South Haven, Michigan.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence please visit: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Sue Marie Brooks

Oct. 7, 1933 – May 29, 2026

Sue Marie Brooks, went to see "her Jesus" very peacefully. She was born in Ellaville, Ga. to her parents Addie Rie Hampton and the Reverend Bernie Hampton.

Sue leaves a legacy of love to be cherished by her daughter Kemarie (Sandy Preiser) Brooks of Zeeland, Mich., and son Wade (Sandy) Brooks of South Haven, Mich., three grandsons, Nicholas Logan Brooks of Glenn, Mich., Noah Hampton Brooks of Grandville, Mich. and John Preiser of Zeeland, Mich. Also survived by several nieces and nephews.

Sue was preceded in death by two sisters: Bernice H (Clay) Sims of Bold Springs, Ga. and Mary Adele (Joe) May of Pensacola, Fla.

In 1952 she graduated High School from Pennington Gap, Va. and in 1956 received her B.S. degree from East Tennessee State University.

On Aug. 11, 1956 she married Ben M. Brooks, and they moved to South Haven, Mich. where she taught school until her retirement in 1989. Sue was an active member in the First Methodist Church where she taught Sunday School for many years.

Visitation will take place from 11 a.m. until the time of the memorial service at noon on Thursday, June 4 at the First United Methodist Church, 429 Michigan Ave, South Haven Michigan 49090. Pastor Stephanie Norton will officiate. Sue will be laid to rest at Lakeview Cemetery at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to First United Methodist Church or Wings of Hope Hospice.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence please visit: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Terry Hill

Feb. 21, 1950 – May 27, 2026

Terry Sue Hill, age 76, passed away on Wednesday, May 27, 2026 in South Haven, Mich.

A celebration of life was held on Friday, June 5 at the Filbrandt Chapel.

Please feel free to sign Terry's online guestbook at www.starksfh.com.

Terry was born on Feb. 21, 1950 in South Haven to Ira and Margaret (Felder) Morehead. A lifelong resident of the area, Terry graduated from South Haven High School in 1968 and kept in close contact with her classmates over the years. Terry met Michael Lee Hill and the two were married on Sept. 25, 1971 in Hartford, Mich.

Terry retired from South Haven Public Schools after many years working as a paraprofessional and teacher's aide, which she loved doing and was extremely proud of.

She enjoyed spending her time crocheting and doing things with her son, Michael, like watching their favorite reality TV shows Cops and Survivor. She was a lifelong dog lover, and her pets were very important to her. Most of all, Terry was a devoted mother and grandmother. She loved being with her grandchildren and was always the biggest cheerleader at their sporting and various school events.

Terry is survived by her husband of 54 years, Michael; children, Richard (Yvette) Hill, Maggie Murillo and John (Jasmine) Hill; grandchildren, Joshua (Madison) Hill, Mikaela (Matt) Morrison, Jacob Hill, Roderic Yelding, Mikey Yelding, Maisie Hill, Tristen Clark, Kendra Hoadley, Audrie Hill, Frankie Rose, Nicholas Hill, Michael Hill and Olivia Hill; great-grandchildren, Kayla, Zoey, Emma and Masen; and siblings, Richard (Fran) Morehead, Sally Naab and Denise Morehead.

Terry was preceded in death by her son, Michael T. Hill, and parents, Ira and Margaret Morehead.

Clyde Dopp

July 28, 1941 – June 1, 2026

Clyde Gerald Dopp, 84, of South Haven, Mich. passed away peacefully on Monday, June 1, 2026 at Laurel Oaks of South Haven. He was born July 28, 1941 in Chicago, Ill. to Gerald and Josephine (Mucia) Dopp.

Clyde was a devoted family man whose greatest joy was spending time with those he loved. An avid outdoorsman, he found peace and adventure bow hunting, fishing on Lake Michigan, and enjoying a round of golf whenever he could. Clyde dedicated more than 30 years of service to GT&E (Verizon) before happily retiring.

For 25 years, he was a proud member of the Corvette Coventry Car Club, sharing his enthusiasm for classic cars and the friendships that came with them. He and his wife, Susan, created many cherished memories while camping together, with Lake Ann holding a special place in their hearts as their favorite getaway.

A lifelong animal lover, Clyde had a special affection for his beloved terriers, who were treasured members of the family. His love for family, friends, animals and the outdoors will be remembered by all who knew him.

Clyde will be missed by his wife of 65 years, Susan (John) Dopp; his sons, Randy (Marilyn) Dopp, Christopher Dopp and Michael (Becky) Dopp; his grandchildren, Zackary Dopp, Coleton (Cierra) Dopp, Shannon Dopp, Morgan Vanginhoven and Paul Rangel; his great grandchildren, Alice, Heath, and Dolly; and his siblings, Doris Howard, Josephine (Ron) Shafer, Floyd "Sandy" (Betty) Dopp and Rex (Wendy) Dopp.

He is preceded in death by his parents.

A celebration of Clyde's life will be held at a later date this summer. He will be buried privately at Monks Cemetery, Bangor, Mich.

Memorial contributions can be given to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at www.stjude.org or to the Humane Society of Southwest Michigan, www.humanesocietyswm.org.

Irene Day

Feb. 27, 1942 – May 28, 2026

Irene Doris Day, age 84, passed away on Thursday, May 28, 2026 in South Haven, Mich. She was born on Feb. 27, 1942 to Henry and Clara (Obser) Hoster in Chicago, Ill.

Irene is survived by her sister, Helga Costello of South Haven; brother, Herbert Hoster of South Haven; nieces, Jeanne Seys of Hurdle Mills, N.C. and Kim Hoster of Portland, Ore.; and nephews, Robert Erny of South Haven and Eli Hoster of Eagle, Colo.

Irene graduated from Barrington High School in Barrington, Ill. in 1959. She then furthered her education at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill., graduating in 1963 with a bachelor's degree in mathematics.

Irene lived and worked in Sun Valley, Idaho for many years before moving back to Michigan in 1980, where she purchased a farm and became an advanced master gardener in 2004. Irene loved working on her farm and being in the natural surroundings that it provided. She also volunteered at Frederik Meijer Gardens, Kalamazoo Nature Center, Windmill Island Gardens in Holland, Mich., and the Kal-Haven Trail helping to maintain the beautiful land she loved. Irene worked at Perrigo Company in Allegan, Mich. for over 30 years, retiring in 2013.

Per Irene's wishes, cremation has taken place and private family services will take place at a later date.

Arrangements by Filbrandt Chapel, 1076 S. Bailey Ave, South Haven, 49090.

Please feel free to visit Irene's online guestbook at www.starksfh.com.

Memorial contributions in Irene's name may be directed to the Kal-Haven Trail Fund.

A look at the numbers for The Obama Presidential Center

By SOPHIA TAREEN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Obama Presidential Center will open June 19, more than a decade after the former president chose his hometown of Chicago for the project. The museum displays campaign memorabilia and presidential artifacts, while its campus showcases a new community basketball court, public library and playground.

A look at the numbers behind the former President Barack Obama's presidential museum.

$850 million

The approximate cost to build the museum tower and nearly 20-acre campus, which is being payed for with private donations. The cost ballooned from the initial estimates of $350 million.

600,000

The number of projected annual visitors to the museum. As many as 1 million people are expected to visit the free amenities each year.

3,500

The approximate number of books the Obamas personally selected for the "Presidential Reading Room" in a new public library branch on campus.

440

The number of different campaign buttons from Obama's campaigns.

28

The number of commissioned works of art from 30 different artists.

The number of beehives on campus. An apiary is part of the gardens and extensive landscaping on campus.

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Meet our Pets of the Week, Hermione!

Hermione is a 5-year-old petite tabby with a beautiful face, a big personality, and just the right amount of sass. This charming girl knows what she likes, and she isn't shy about letting you know when she's ready for attention. One of Hermione's favorite things in the world is a good head scratch. If you're willing to provide them, she'll happily make you part of her inner circle. Submit an adoption survey at al-van.org/adopt.

Furry 5K

It's time to lace up and leash up! Registration is now open for Al-Van Humane Society's annual Furry 5K & 1-Mile Walk, scheduled for June 27th! Enjoy a scenic run or walk along the Van Buren Trail and bring your four-legged running buddy along for the fun. Whether you're racing for a personal best or just out for a relaxed stroll with your dog, this event is a great way to support the animals at Al-Van Humane Society. Participants can look forward to: Custom finisher medals, age group awards and special awards for top overall and masters runners.
To register visit our website at al-van.org/adopt.

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SH foundation awards grants to 21 local organizations

Photo provided / Tom Renner

Grant recipients gathered on June 1 at South Haven City Hall to receive their checks.

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Community Foundation recently announced the distribution of $125,233 in grant awards to 21 local organizations.

According to a news release, the foundation makes grants available each year to local non-profit organizations.

"Our community thrives when neighbors, nonprofits, and local leaders work together," Board President Bob Straits said in the release. "This year's grant recipients demonstrate the creativity, compassion and collaborative spirit that make South Haven such a remarkable place to live."

This year's grant recipients include:

- Al-Van Humane Society
- Area Agency on Aging
- Bangor Trap Team
- Foundry Hall
- Hope Parent Resource Center
- Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Memorial Fund
- Michigan Maritime Museum
- People Helping People
- Pretty Inc.
- South Haven Area Emergency Services
- South Haven Boating Foundation
- South Haven Center for the Arts
- South Haven Dog Park
- South Haven Performance Series
- South Haven Regional Business Hub
- South Haven Speakers Series
- South Haven Steelheaders
- South Haven Theatre Series
- Van Buren County Volunteer Sheriff
- We Care Community Resource Center
- Youth Development Co./PAL

"The South Haven Area Community Foundation works to support nonprofit organizations, steward charitable funds and encourage community philanthropy," the release stated.

The foundation manages and builds endowments, which generate interest annually to be paid out in grants.

"These grants reflect the foundation's commitment to collaboration, partnership and long-term community vitality," the release stated.

Grant criteria are aimed at enhancing quality of life in the South Haven Area with focus areas in education, arts and culture and economic development.

The foundation has granted more than $1.6 million since the foundation's inception in 2005.

To learn more about the South Haven Area Community Foundation, go to southhavencf.org.

Photo provided

The Michigan Flywheelers Museum will be hosting its second annual Garden Tractor Show and Flea Market from June 12 to 14.

Michigan Flywheelers Museum to host tractor show, flea market

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Gas up those little ol' garden tractors and head to the Michigan Flywheelers Museum for its second annual Garden Tractor Show and Flea Market.

According to a news release, the outdoor event takes place from June 12 through 14.

The event was expanded last year to include garden tractors as an added feature of the Swap Meet and Flea Market.

As a fundraiser for the museum, the show will feature parades, pulls and a large outdoor flea market with over 100 vendors selling everything from bakery goods to bikes.

Friday starts with a kids' pedal pull at 11 a.m. followed by garden tractor pulls at 5 p.m. and a lighted tractor parade at 8 p.m. Saturday begins with kids' pedal pulls at 11 a.m., a parade at 2 p.m. and garden tractor pulls at 2:30 p.m.

"We added this event as a way to encourage younger people to get interested in tractors," Museum Director Jason Adams said in the release. "We've noticed a trend over the years during our September antique engine and tractor show that young adults as well as kids first buy a riding lawn mower to bring to the show and eventually start collecting antique tractors."

The museum started the event over 25 years ago as a way to raise funds for operational costs as well as building and equipment restoration projects.

"It started as a swap meet for old engine enthusiasts to buy, trade and sell parts," the release stated. "Over the years, it evolved into more of a flea market."

Tractor pulls hosted by the Lakeshore Antique Tractor Pullers will take place on June 13 starting at noon.

Admission is $2 per person with children 12 and under free with paid admission.

The museum hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 9 a.m. to noon on Sunday. Parking is free.

Exhibitor and vendor registration starts from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on June 11. There is no charge to show a tractor, but there is a $20 camping fee for any exhibitor bringing in a motorhome or RV.

For people wanting to bring a personal transportation vehicle – like a golf cart – there is a $30 registration fee

No pets allowed with paid admission. Pets are only allowed with those selling or exhibiting.

Zero turn mowers are not allowed and mower decks must be removed. Drivers under the age of 12 must have a guardian with them while driving.

For those interested in participating in the tractor pulls, there is a $5 donation which includes unlimited pulls.

Those interested in selling in the flea market; set up starts at 8 a.m. on June 11. There is no pre-registration as spaces are on a first come basis. There is no limit to the amount of space a seller can take. Cost is $20 for both days.

For more information go to www.michiganflywheelers.org, call 269-639-2010, or contact Adams at 269-650-3267 or via email at l.merfud@yahoo.com.

The Michigan Flywheelers Museum is located at 06285 68th Street.

Blessings in a Backpack aids 254 South Haven students

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven chapter of Blessings in a Backpack recently expressed their thanks to the community for helping serve local elementary students this school year.

According to a news release, the chapter spent $28,852 on food for the students, which is a 29 percent increase from last year, to provide the necessary nutrition for the children.

"Blessings in a Backpack is a program with nationwide chapters to help provide weekend food to augment the dietary needs of students who may go hungry," the release stated.

Bags contain meal and snack items such as macaroni and cheese, ravioli, meat sticks, protein bars, cereal and peanut butter.

The South Haven chapter of blessings service included:

- 245 elementary students weekly
- A total of 7,373 bags of food, filled and delivered
- 21 percent more students than last school year
- 30 percent of total enrollment of elementary school students

"The Steering Committee of our local Blessings in a Backpack Program wishes to extend our sincere thank you to the Rotary Club of South Haven for the many volunteer hours donated to manage this valuable program," the release stated.

Other South Haven volunteer groups served as the crew to pack the weekend food bags for South Haven's elementary school students for this academic year including:

- AAUW
- Kiwanis Club
- St. Basil's Catholic Church
- Vacation Rental Group
- Rotary Club

"Donations did not match demand in the 2025-2026 school year and the Blessings in a Backpack program is asking for your help," the release stated. "Please help us spread the word about this all volunteer managed and operated not-for-profit organization within our community."

Those interested in supporting the Blessing in a Backpack program can send donations to:

- South Haven Area Community Foundation-Blessings in a Backpack (Action fund), PO Box 507, South Haven, MI 49090
- Blessings in a Backpack South Haven Fund #1123, PO Box 950291, Louisville, KY 40295

Photo provided

The South Haven chapter of Blessings in a Backpack helped give 245 students in need bags that contain meal and snack items.

Tens of thousands are making annual peony pilgrimage to University of Michigan's garden

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER
Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Nicole Calvin has been visiting the University of Michigan campus annually over the past 16 years to catch a peek – and a whiff – of the school's sizable peony collection.

She even came twice this year.

"I just love walking through the gardens," Calvin said Monday. "I love that they come from different places, and there's different varieties, different colors. It smells amazing. It's just a really beautiful place to be."

The Ann Arbor school anticipates 100,000 visitors will come to behold the unique perennials and their showy pink, white and red blooms of many shades and varieties.

The W.E. Upjohn Peony Garden features one of the largest collections of historic – pre-1950 – herbaceous peonies in North America and likely the world.

Mike Householder / AP

Nicole Calvin crouches down to look at peonies on display at Nichols Arboretum's W.E. Upjohn Peony Garden on Monday in Ann Arbor.

"There's been a long fascination with this plant, because, when it's peak, it's so out there. It's such a big show," said Doug Conley, horticulture lead of Nichols Arboretum, known locally as The Arb. "And our collection is overwhelming. When you see this garden at peak bloom, there's nothing like it. You're captivated by it."

The peony watch is a spectator sport with so many visitors arriving at The Arb each spring to behold the garden plant that they have to be bused in.

The W.E. Upjohn Peony Garden contains hundreds of historic cultivated varieties from the 19th and early 20th centuries, representing American, Canadian and European peonies of the era. At peak bloom, the garden typically features tens of thousands of flowers.

The garden is free to visit and open from sunrise to sunset. For those drawn to the peony's scent, it's best to show up early in the morning or late in the evening, when the fragrances are the best.

"It is restorative for all of us, I think, to come out into nature and be surrounded by joy, beauty," Conley said. "It's a delightful place for people to just come and gather and be."

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Susan Metzger

Court address Court telephone no.
212 E. Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079 (269)657-8225

Estate of: Robert P. Griffin, Sr., deceased
Date of Birth: * March 16, 1938

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Robert P. Griffin, Sr., deceased, died March 22, 2026. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Robert P. Griffin, Jr., personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 6/3/2026

Miller Johnson Schroeder PLC
Reinhold Schroeder P67349
Attorney name Bar no.
728 Pleasant Street, Suite 101
St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269)983-7111

Robert P. Griffin, Jr.
Personal representative name
13353 Callan Drive
Orland Park, IL 60462
(312)259-4026

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN
Proceedings of the Regular City Council Meeting
Council Chambers, City Hall
7:00 p.m. June 1, 2026

THE FOLLOWING ARE NOT APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Present: Jeff Arnold, Tom Capps, Dave Flack, Mary Hosley, Eddie Polk, Letitia Wilkins, Annie Brown
Absent: None
Call to Order by Mayor Annie Brown at 7:00 p.m.
Moved by Arnold to approve the agenda. Seconded by Hosley. Motion was adopted unanimously.
Grant awards given by the South Haven Area Community Foundation were recognized. Proclamation issued for Diane and Lisa Van Deurzen-Otey.
Public Comment excluding items scheduled for public hearing was held.
Moved by Hosley to approve the Consent Agenda Items B-D. Seconded by Arnold. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Arnold, Capps, Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Brown. No: None. Motion adopted.
Moved by Arnold, seconded by Flack, to approve Consent Agenda Item A. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Arnold, Capps, Flack, Polk, Wilkins, Brown. No: Hosley. Motion adopted
Motion by Arnold to adopt Resolution 2026-19 entitled A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2026-27 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET FOR COMPONENT UNIT FUNDS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN, MICHIGAN; Resolution 2027-20 entitled A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2026-27 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET FOR GENERAL, SPECIAL REVENUE, DEBT SERVICE, CAPTIAL PROJECT AND FIDUCIARY FUNDS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN, MICHIGAN; Resolution 2026-21 entitled A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2026-27 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET FOR ENTERPRISE AND INTERNAL SERVICE FUNDS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVE, MICHIGAN, and Resolution 2026-22 entitled A RESOLUTION SETTING THE 2026 PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE. Seconded by Capps. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Arnold, Capps, Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Brown. No: None. Motion adopted.
Moved by Hosley to approve Special Event Application 2026-16, National Blueberry Festival, and Special Event Application 2026-18 Al-Van's Furry 5k. Seconded by Arnold. Motion was adopted unanimously.
Moved by Arnold to approve an update of the beach safety plan. Seconded by Polk. Motion was adopted unanimously.
City Manager Kate Hosier spoke on thanked South Haven Area Community Foundation, staff for their work, and noted dredging has begun in the harbor Mayor and Councilpersons shared thoughts and comments.
Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Megan Kiker, City Clerk

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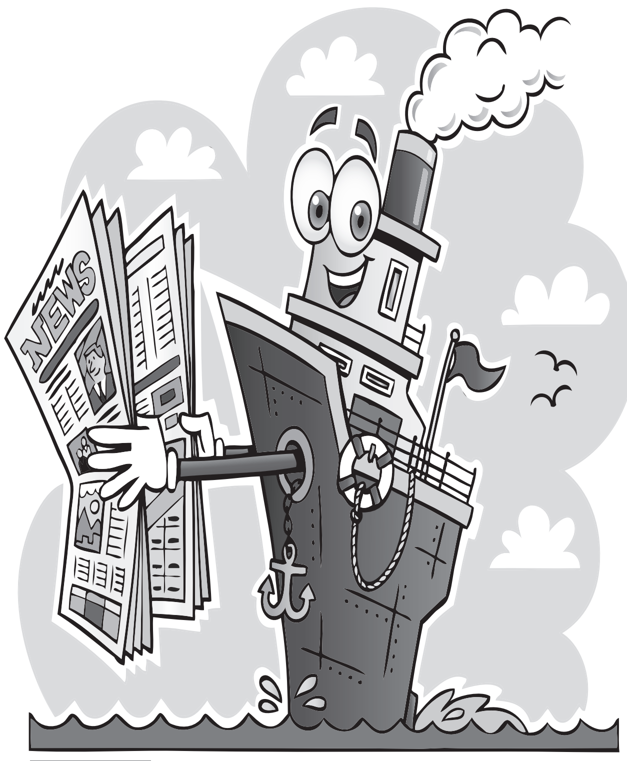

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Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!

South Haven Theatre Series presents 'Michiganderish'

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Theatre Series will kick off its season with a special performance on June 20.

The play, "Michiganderish" is written and performed by Julie Ganey and will begin at 7:30 p.m. in South Haven's Listiak Auditorium at 600 Elkenburg St.

"When Julie and her husband find a nice spot to get away and relax, what they find is Pure Michigan – from unruly chipmunks and menacing deer to errant chainsaws and quirky neighbors," the release stated. "But most unexpected is the couple's discovery of the often-hilarious adventures of transitioning from visitors to full-time residents. Laugh with them as they realize what it takes to belong to a community."

Ganey is a 30-year veteran of the Chicago theatrical scene as an actor, writer and teaching artist at the Goodman Theatre and as an adjunct professor at the Theatre School of DePaul University.

Tickets are $15 and students are welcome free of charge. Doors open at 7 p.m. with performances starting at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available for purchase at www.southhaventheatreseries.org.

Tickets may also be purchased at Visit South Haven Visitor's Bureau or at the door. Cash, debit or credit cards are accepted.

"The South Haven Theatre Series is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching our community through thoughtful, socially engaging professional theatrical productions," the release stated.

The series is made possible through grants and corporate and individual donations; including grants from the South Haven Area Community Foundation and sponsorship by Sturgis Bank.

To learn more or to donate, go to southhaventheatreseries.org.

For more information, contact southhaventheatreseries@gmail.com or call 269-350-4833.

Photo provided

The South Haven Theatre Series will kick off its season with a special performance of "Michiganderish," written and performed by Julie Ganey.

Clothing boutique LUXE by the Lake opens in SH

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed LUXE by the Lake as a new chamber member.

According to a news release, the boutique's opening in downtown South Haven was celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Owned by South Haven native Lynneise Karadsheh-Lane, LUXE by the Lake was born from a longtime dream rooted in both fashion and community.

"While she was in school for her doctoral degree and building a career in the pharmaceutical industry, Lynneise continued to nurture her passion for fashion, styling, and helping women feel confident in what they wear," the release stated.

She previously operated an online fitness boutique while in college, where her love for the industry continued to grow.

For years, Karadsheh-Lane held onto the vision of opening a boutique in her hometown, waiting for the right opportunity and space to bring it to life. When a downtown storefront became available, the timing felt right.

"At LUXE by the Lake, our goal is to create a space where women of all ages, styles, and sizes feel welcomed, confident and beautiful," Karadsheh-Lane said in the release.

LUXE by the Lake offers a curated selection of stylish, affordable and size-inclusive clothing and accessories, with sizes ranging from XS–3X.

In addition to apparel, the boutique carries handbags, jewelry, shoes, gifts and everyday statement pieces designed to make fashion feel fun, accessible and empowering.

"Being part of the South Haven community remains at the heart of the business," the release stated. "Lynneise shared that she values building relationships with customers, supporting fellow local businesses and creating a shopping experience that feels personal, warm and welcoming for both locals and visitors alike."

LUXE by the Lake is located at 202 Center St. in downtown South Haven.

Photo provided

The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed LUXE by the Lake as a new chamber member with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

DEE

From page A1

Frost was director of instructional services and I was director of non-instructional services. It helped him organize leadership that way.

What are your responsibilities as director of non-instructional services?

A lot of it's like operations and facilities. I manage all the facilities, deal with all the bond and construction issues. Custodial maintenance, grounds and then all the facility updates. I work with technologies, one of my departments, I work closely with them and anything that they need me to do it. I help with security a lot; whether it's the physical improvements or some of our policies and that sort of stuff. Help out with transportation as needed. I probably do a lot of the bigger procurement stuff because I kind of manage all the bonds, the majority of the bond work. I also do that by going through that bidding process and do a lot of those sorts of big projects.

Did you ever think that you would be where you're at today?

No, I probably wouldn't think that. I've worked with schools for a long time, but I've always been more on the engineering, mechanical, building trade side of the world. The opportunity to help support the classrooms; it's always been our role, whether it's, make sure the environment's clean and safe and comfortable is a big part of it. Getting to work more in the classrooms and seeing how our work impacts instructional type of things, especially with technology, it's been really rewarding and it's been really fun.

Did you always know that you wanted to go into a trade job?

No, I really probably wasn't 100 percent sure what I wanted to do. I've always been mechanically inclined. My dad was very mechanically inclined – our family was and always enjoyed doing that. I've always thought that I would probably go back to the private sector when I started up here, when I worked for Grandville, and there's just a lot of rewards for doing what we do and it's a nice environment to work in.

I got involved with the robotics team and coached robotics for five years. That was a lot of fun. Kids are amazing, what they can learn and do and opportunities there for them. Being able to be invested in that is really great. My kids went here and graduated through here and went on to very successful careers. Being able to watch them grow and be here, that was quite special – a great opportunity.

Do you have any hidden talents, special skills or fun hobbies that you enjoy?

We really enjoy our homestead here. We have a really nice piece of land out in the country here and we enjoy hobby farming. I hunt, but we really enjoy the nature environment. Obviously, we love Lake Michigan on the beach here, everything Southwest Michigan has to offer. We like to be outdoor sporty people, whether it's snowmobiling or skiing and enjoy the outdoors and enjoy the environment that we got to live in.

What kind of homestead do you have?

It's a garden place. We just raise the family and we like our pets; (I'm) a dog person and we like our cats, too. Maybe when we retire, we'll look at (getting) some chickens or other livestock or something.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

BRIDGE

From page A1

Bridge authority officials did not respond Friday to a request for comment on the status of the bridge project.

Trump's ambassador to Canada, former Michigan congressman Pete Hoekstra, has said the final decision rests with the second-term Republican president.

"At the end of the day, the president will have to sign off on it," Hoekstra told The Detroit News in April. "There's a lot of issues right now between the U.S. and Canada. The bridge is one more."

Canadian expert: 'People are anxious to see the Gordie open'

There has been near silence for months among Michigan and Canadians official after Trump publicly threatened to block the opening of the bridge following the revelation of a meeting between his commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, and Matthew Moroun, the billionaire owner of the Ambassador Bridge, whose private crossing will face the first competition for lucrative truck traffic in the Ambassador's 97 years of operation.

In February, a White House official suggested that Trump could amend the Gordie Howe Bridge's presidential permit, issued in 2013 by then-President Barack Obama as a means of extracting toll revenue or other concessions from the Canadians.

Under the original deal, Michigan and Canada share equal ownership of the bridge, but Michigan can't benefit from the toll revenue until Canada pays off the debt it incurred constructing the six-lane bridge, customs plaza and connections to Interstate 75 in Detroit and Ontario's 401 Highway.

The months-long stalemate, combined with the tariffs the Trump administration slapped on Canadian vehicles, car auto parts, steel, aluminum, copper and lumber, has created jitters across the Detroit River.

"Businesses are still holding their cards close to their chest; they're still waiting to see what the outcome of a renegotiated (U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement) will look like," said Marta Leardi-Anderson, executive director of the Cross Border Institute at the University of Windsor. "... But I think people are anxious to see the Gordie open. It's a beautiful piece of infrastructure."

Former U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg: 'Open the bridge!'

The U.S.-Canada trade negotiations détente and the uncertain opening of the Canadian-financed Gordie Howe Bridge without U.S. or Michigan taxpayer support were simmering issues at this week's Mackinac Policy Conference, a gathering of the state's business and political leaders hosted by the Detroit Regional Chamber, which spent years lobbying for a new bridge.

"It's finally built, (and) President Trump is preventing it from opening," Detroit Regional Chamber CEO Sandy Baruah said Wednesday on stage at the conference in the Grand Hotel's theater.

"What is the impact of that? And is there any rationale for not opening?" Baruah asked former U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

"No!" Buttigieg shouted. "No, there is not! Open the bridge!"

Buttigieg, who ran the U.S. Department of Transportation under former President Joe Biden, said the Trump administration's delay tactics are an act of "corruption" after Moroun donated $1 million to a pro-Trump political organization. Moroun also sat for an in-person meeting with Howard Lutnick, the commerce secretary, hours before Trump announced his opposition to the bridge opening.

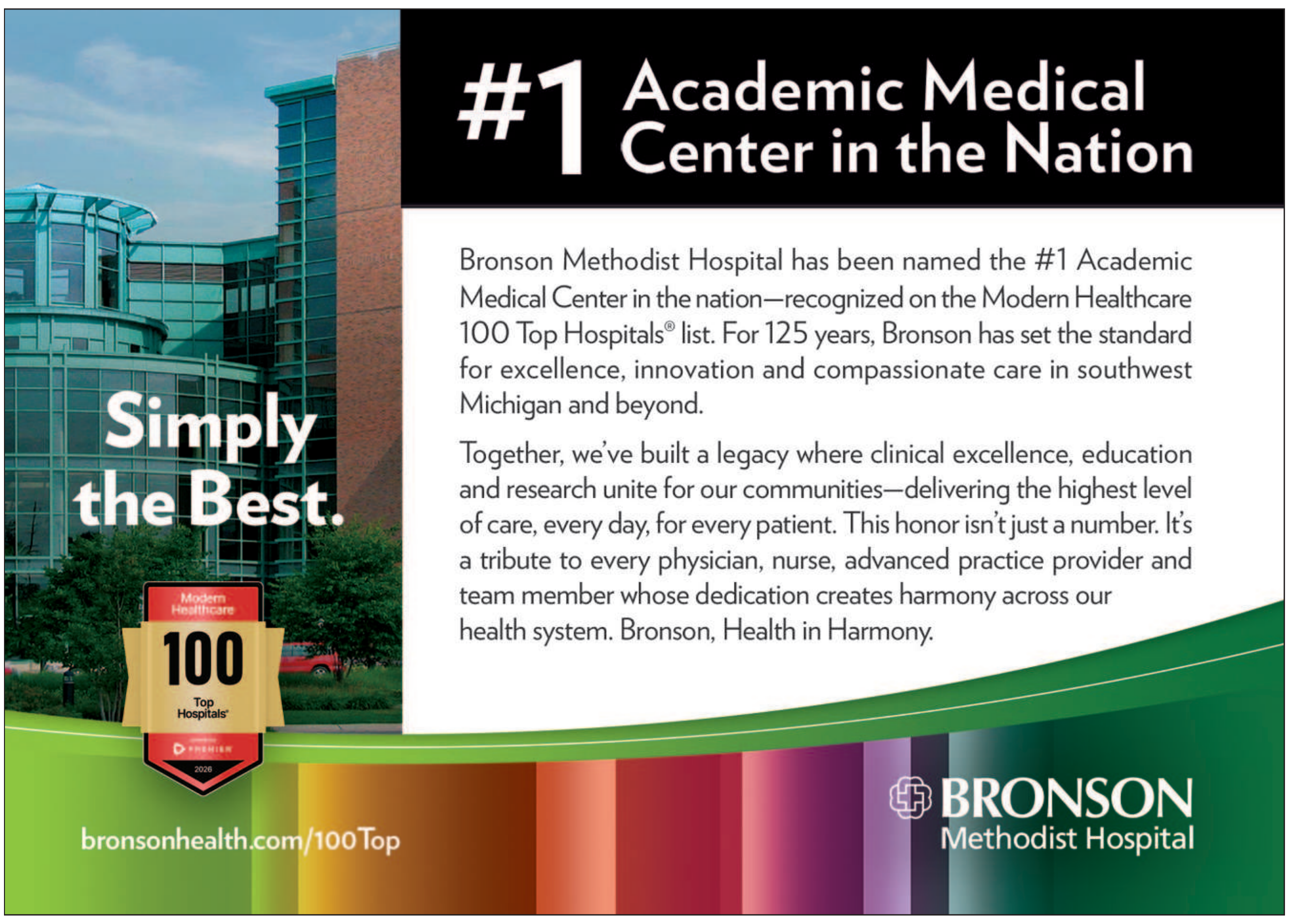
"It is as simple as that. It is corruption," Buttigieg said. "And I would expect and hope every Republican and every Democrat in this state and in this region will be equally full-throated about demanding that that corrupt reason be dismantled, that that bridge be open."

Moroun and his family's Detroit International Bridge Co. have never publicly explained why he donated the money to MAGA Inc., a pro-Trump independent expenditure-only political committee, more commonly known as a super PAC. A spokesman for the Moroun bridge company did not respond Friday to a message seeking comment.

Buttigieg characterized the "corruption" as "blindingly obvious."

"The bridge should be opened, and there should be nothing political about it," he said.

"Awesome. Love that answer," Baruah replied.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9 to 10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

South Haven Memorial Library: Bridge Card Game from 1 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday. Open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for students grades 6 through 12 every Monday from 3 to 5 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: May 1 through 31 "Deep In the Branches" (by 2026 Bailey Fall Conference Keynote Speaker Danae Wolfe) Story-Walk

South Haven Farmers Market: Open from 8 a.m. to 2pm on Saturdays, from May to October; and on Wednesdays from June through August.

South Haven Center for the Arts: National juried exhibition with the Arts and Aging Partnership of Southwest Michigan on display from June 20 to Aug. 1.

Photos provided / Tom Renner

The volunteers from SHOUT for South Haven, the South Haven Garden Club, Rotary Club of South Haven, Bronson Hospital and Mayor Annie Brown worked to plant flowers in various places across South Haven.

Flowers adorn South Haven in several locations including the downtown Huntington Bank wall, the Dyckman drawbridge, Stanley Johnston Park and Dyckman Park.

June

7 – Reader's Theater: "That's Life" performance at 3 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County auditorium. Tickets are available for $10 at the door.

8 – South Haven Garden Club: regular meeting with Plant Bingo. Social time begins at 12:30 p.m., meeting begins at 1 p.m.

9 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting. Presentation will be by Nicholas Dalton on Rural Development Enterprise as Economic/Business Development.

9-11 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Bailey's Nature Buddies from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Registration is open.

10 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

12 – First United Methodist Church: Concert of duos featuring clarinetist Andrea Cheeseman and violinist Nancy Bargerstock at 7:30 p.m.

12-14 – Michigan Flywheelers Museum: Swap Meet and Flee Market.

12-14 – Gingerman Raceway: Gridlife Midwest Festival.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m.

15 – South Haven Memorial Library: Kids Bingo at 5 p.m.

15-19 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Bailey's Budding Naturalists week one. Online registration is open. Campers can register for one or both weeks.

16 – Scott Club: Annual Membership Meeting and Luncheon at Senior Services, 08337 M-140, South Haven. No Zoom. RSVP is required via email at info@scottclub.org.

17 – South Haven Memorial Library: Summer Reading Program kick off. Participants can come in at their convenience and sew your own dino chicken nugget.

19 – South Haven Memorial Library: Learn about essential water safety tips

20 – South Haven Theatre Series: "Michiganderish" written and performed by Julie Ganey at 7:30 p.m. at Listiak Auditorium. Tickets cost $15 with free admission for students.

20 – South Haven Center for the Arts: opening reception for exhibitions "Care" and "Window to our World" from 2 to 4 p.m.

22 – Lake Michigan College: free screening of "Old Heart" at 6:30 p.m. hosted by the First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven, Lily of the Valley Church in Covert and Temple B'nai Shalom in St. Joseph.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Moa the Dino Bird at 11 a.m. Meet Moa, the giant bird that once roamed New Zealand. Artist Megan Bennett brings this fascinating prehistoric creature to life through art and story telling.

22-26 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Bailey's Budding Naturalists week two. Online registration is open. Campers can register for one or both weeks.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: Rock Painting at 11 a.m. Decorate and arrange rocks to create a prehistoric rock garden for the library and a few to take home.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

25 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m. Attendees can also make a dinosaur keychain.

26 – South Haven Performance Series: The Lincoln Trio to perform at 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 429 Michigan Ave. Admission is $15 and free for students.

26 – South Haven Memorial Library: free movie screening of The Land Before Time at 2 p.m.

27 – First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven: Tot Shabbat at the South Haven Memorial Library from 5 to 6 p.m..

27 – Scott Club: 29th Annual Cottage Walk from noon to 5 p.m. Tickets are $20 per person.

29 – South Haven Memorial Library: Kids Bingo at 5 p.m.

30 – South Haven Memorial Library: Preschool Storytime at 11 a.m.

Beach sampling season begins in Allegan County

By TRIBUNE STAFF

ALLEGAN — The Allegan County Health Department recently began its beach sampling season at select beaches and will continue testing through the last week of August.

According to a news release, the sampling and testing monitors E. coli levels in recreational waters so the public is aware of the beach conditions before recreating in those areas.

Beach monitoring is funded by grants from the Beach Act (Great Lakes beaches) and the State of Michigan's Renew Michigan funds (inland beaches).

Based on funding received, the health department selected six Allegan County beaches to sample including:

■ Oval Beach (Saugatuck)
■ West Side County Park Beach (Ganges)
■ Dumont Lake County Park Beach (Monterey)
■ Gun Lake County Park Beach (Wayland)
■ Little John Lake County Park Beach (Allegan)
■ Swan Lake Boat Launch (Cheshire)

Test results will be posted to the department's website and Facebook page. Results can also be found on the MiEnviro BeachGuard Website.

"If a beach tests above the established state health recommendations for E. coli, an advisory will be issued and posted on the ACHD website and Facebook page," the release stated.

Signage will be posted at the affected beach, recommending people avoid the water until follow-up testing shows that levels have lowered.

"Swimming in any recreational body of water, including man-made ones – pools, hot tubs, etc. – comes with the risk of exposure to waterborne germs," the release stated. "Children, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk for waterborne illnesses.

The germs can lead to ailments including:

■ Irritation of eyes, skin, or respiratory tract
■ Swimmer's ear
■ Flu-like illnesses
■ Diarrhea

"Most of the time, Allegan County beaches and State Parks are safe, but use your best judgment when deciding to swim, including looking up current BeachGuard testing results," the release stated.

To keep swimming areas safe and reduce the risk of waterborne illness, the Allegan health department encourages beach goers to follow safety tips including:

■ Dispose of trash, animal waste, and boat waste properly
■ Use the restroom before swimming
■ Do not swim in water that smells foul or looks murky
■ Do not swim immediately after heavy rain when E. coli levels may be high
■ Do not swallow lake water
■ Vigorously towel off after swimming
■ Wash your hands with soap and water before eating
■ Shower as soon as possible when you return home

For more information on Allegan County beach monitoring go to allegancounty.org/health or contact the health department at 269-673-5415 or via email at alleganeh@allegancounty.org.

More information on E. coli in surface water and water quality standards can be found at Michigan.gov/ecoli.

Search for Michigan woman Lynette Hooker resumes in Bahamas, report says

By MAX REINHART
The Detroit News (TNS)

The Coast Guard is resuming its search for a missing Michigan woman in the waters surrounding the Bahamas.

Divers with the Coast Guard have arrived and are preparing to reenter the Sea of Abaco in search of Lynette Hooker, 56, CNN reported, citing a U.S. official familiar with the investigation.

Coast Guard media spokespersons didn't immediately respond to a message from The Detroit News seeking comment.

Hooker went missing April 4 during a nighttime dinghy ride with her husband, 59-year-old Brian Hooker. Family members said the couple were experienced boaters who had been in the Bahamas for about a month.

Brian Hooker told Bahamian police that rough waters capsized their 8-foot boat and that Lynette went overboard with the keys, causing the vessel's engine to shut off, authorities said.

He said they became separated in the dark and when he was unable to find her, he paddled the dinghy ashore and reported her missing.

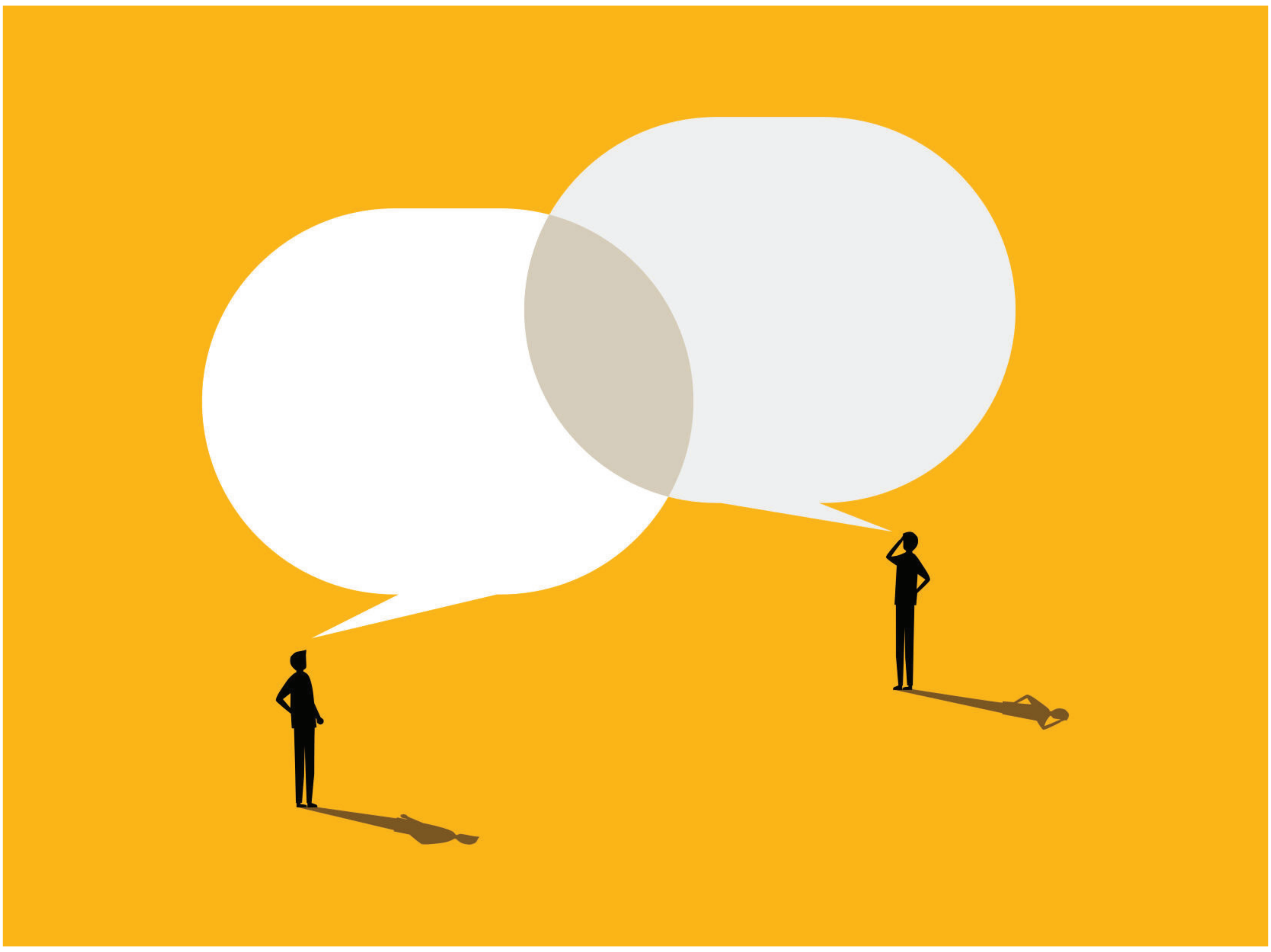
Crews searched the area where Brian Hooker said Lynette went missing for several days, without success. Brian was taken into custody for five days and repeatedly questioned about his wife's disappearance before being released without charges, officials said.

The U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service is reopening the search based on recently obtained GPS data pulled from one of Brian Hooker's electronic devices, CBS News reported. The data appears to contradict his initial account of where he was the night Lynette went missing. Fox 2 Detroit reported that the new data suggests Hooker may have sent search crews to the wrong area.

Lynette Hooker's daughter, Karli Aylesworth, has questioned her stepfather's story, noting that her mother was a strong swimmer unlikely to be carried out to sea.

One of the Hookers' neighbors in the Lenawee County community of Onsted has described their marriage as turbulent, with a long history of fighting.

FOCUS



Yutthana Gaetgeaw / Getty Images

‘Debate me!’ doesn’t work

Here are better ways to disagree – and maybe change minds

By LISA PAVIA-HIGEL
Missouri University of Science and Technology
(The Conversation)

Spend time on social media and you will see debates with titles like “I destroy MAGA mom on vaccines” or “Conservative philosopher owns feminist student.” These popular videos focus on clip-worthy gotcha questions, one-line zingers and screaming matches edited for virality.

These “debates” would be unrecognizable to the Founding Fathers, who enshrined debate as a primary tool of legislative deliberation. Even the passionate exchanges of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, whose 1858 “great debates” about slavery drew crowds of thousands, are tame compared with today’s vitriolic exchanges. While Lincoln and Douglas exchanged insults, played to the crowd and took a few logical leaps, they could still communicate respectfully.

Then, as now, Americans were deeply divided. But today’s wars of words seem designed to fuel intense polarization, not to change minds.

Debate is broken as a tool to inform, explore ideas and persuade an audience. It’s time to find another way.

That’s a difficult conclusion for me. As a communications professor, I believe presenting an argument, listening thoughtfully to the response and responding with a rebuttal is excellent critical thinking and public speaking practice. However, when I assign a shortened Lincoln-Douglas structure, many students ask when they get to “really” debate – meaning the ruthless online back and forth.

Research says that persuasion is possible in other ways. But the process requires understanding, perspective-taking and collaboration. People must choose communication, not competition.

Us vs. them

How did even presidential debates become so combative, so filled with personal insults, that moderators have to mute microphones to stop constant interruptions?

Political scientist Lilliana Mason says a major factor is that political affiliation has become central to Americans’ personal identity. Her 2018 book, “Uncivil Agreement,” argues that in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, political parties started aligning less with specific policies and more with social identities, such as race, class, religion and sexual orientation.

As the parties became less diverse, both demographically and ideologically, political affiliation became an umbrella-like mega-identity that stacks different aspects of personal identities together and has created two large teams: conservative and liberal. In some ways, the two parties form different cultures, though no group is a monolith. There are surface differences, such as where liberals and conservatives tend to live, and deeper ones about values and beliefs. Ultimately, mega-identity creates a sense that the “other side” is a threat.

These identities contribute to a person’s sense of self and shape how they see others too. The more someone aligns with a political party’s constituent identities, the more partisan they become, and the stronger the influence of mega-identity.

When political affiliation becomes tied to self-concept, it links to a person’s deepest values: their sense of right and wrong. That’s why conversations about controversial issues frequently elicit defensiveness. Hearing conflicting ideas feels like you are being attacked, as though you need to defend yourself and your community or lose face.

Want to talk?

With tensions this high, avoiding politics in conversation is tempting – but often hard to avoid. And sidestepping tough topics could do just as much harm as tackling them, since deep conversations are important for the health of our relationships.

So, what can be done to sway someone on controversial issues? One successful method with research behind it is called deep canvassing. The technique was originally built for door-knockers advocating for ballot initiatives but can be adapted to other kinds of fraught conversations.

First, decide which topics you can really be civil about. If something feels so personal that any contrary opinion makes you throw up internal walls, it may not be the right topic for bridge building.

Next, cordially invite the other person into a conversation, building rapport without putting them on the spot. Something like, “I saw your post on Facebook about immigration and I wanted to talk with you about it. Are you up for that?” or “I’m curious about why you think that way. Care to talk about it?” The tone should be friendly and casual.

If they accept, gauge where they are on the topic. Canvassers start by asking a person on a 1-10 scale where they stand on an issue and why. This allows the person to articulate their position and gives them time to process how they feel and why.

Often, the initial statements and opinions they’ll share are inflammatory ones they’ve heard elsewhere, including politicians’ talking points and media sound bites. It can be tempting to start building a counterargument or to interrupt.

Don’t. Stay open and let them talk. Remember, these issues might touch on their sense of identity and can easily trigger defensiveness, so saying, “Well, actually …” could shut down the conversation.

Sharing stories

As the conversation deepens, the goal is to move past talking points into storytelling. Journalist Mónica Guzmán, in her 2022 book “I Never Thought of It That Way,” suggests questions like, “What shaped your views on this?” or “Do you know someone who …” or “What experiences have you had that make you think this way?”

Listen for connection points, such as shared values, emotions and experiences. In a conversation about voting rights, fairness could be a shared value, no matter where you stand on a given policy. Talking about gun control? Safety could be a starting point. Canvassers link that underlying value to a story or experience of theirs that shows the other side of the issue.

For example:

“I hear what you’re saying about wanting everyone to have an ID to vote. I can see we agree on wanting elections to be fair. However, I remember when REAL ID came out, I had to go to one county to get a copy of my first marriage license, another to get a copy of my divorce decree, and then dig out my new marriage license and all the other required documents. If I couldn’t take time off, or if I didn’t have reliable transportation, I might have just given up.”

Exchanging stories can go around defensive walls and open people up to conversation, making us more open-minded and curious about each other – a moment of humanization.

“I worry that this proposal could make it hard for everyone to have a voice, and that feels unfair to me. I’m curious, do you think there might be a better way to prevent fraud and make sure the process is accessible?”

Notice the lack of sources and statistics? Not focusing on data can drive a traditional debater crazy. But someone’s political stance can actually change how they interpret raw data, a process called motivated numeracy. Statistics that contradict a strongly held belief are often discarded as “fake news.”

The conversation usually ends with the canvasser asking the other person whether their rating on the issue has moved at all. If it took 21 hours for Lincoln and Douglas to talk through their issues, it is unrealistic to assume one short conversation will make a dramatic difference. But civil experiences with someone who holds a different opinion can stick with the person long after the conversation ends.

I think debate, with its competitive point scoring, no longer serves us, but techniques drawn from deep canvassing can build bridges. Perhaps with patience and practice, conversations like these can build empathy, promote compromise and begin to disassemble the walls dividing us.

Lisa Pavia-Higel is an assistant teaching professor of English and technical communication at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. *This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.*

FOCUS

Low wages, empty plates, heavy toll

Rethinking suicide prevention

By ANERI PATTANI
KFF Health News (TNS)

Maddie McGarvey / KFF Health News / TNS

Rei Scott wants suicide prevention efforts to include meeting people's basic needs, such as food and housing. In Scott's own experience, not having a sure place to sleep the next night has often prompted suicidal thoughts. "There's so many times in my life where I've thought if I had $5,000, I wouldn't even be suicidal right now," Scott says.

As a teenager, Rei Scott spent several weeks living out of a car with four family members and their dog. Each day, Scott worried about where they would spend the following night.

One day at school, Scott snuck away to the bathroom and called the national suicide hotline.

Scott, who is transgender and nonbinary, explained to the hotline counselor that the family had struggled with poverty for years. They had lived in crumbling homes with water leaks, or a family member's basement with no privacy. Sometimes the family worried about having enough food. The stress and anxiety were constant, and Scott had been suicidal many times.

The counselor seemed shocked into silence, Scott said. Eventually, the person provided reassurance and kindness.

But what Scott really needed that day a decade ago and many times since was a fix for the economic difficulties that had become an unbearable weight.

"It can definitely help to have someone who can listen, but when you're struggling to eat and you don't have a roof to be under, I honestly don't think words can go as far as you need them to," said Scott, who now studies social work at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio.

Over the years, Scott has been directed to hospitals and therapists. But those generally don't address core problems, such as a broken-down car or an eviction notice.

"There's so many times in my life where I've thought if I had $5,000, I wouldn't even be suicidal right now," Scott said.

People don't typically think of suicide as an issue of economics, but it often is.

Decades of research shows that unemployment, low income, high debt, unstable housing, and food insecurity make people more likely to kill themselves. Conversely, things that bring down people's cost of living – such as increasing the minimum wage, providing food assistance, offering tax credits, and expanding health insurance coverage – are linked to lower suicide rates.

It makes sense. If someone can cover their basic needs, their life will feel better.

Other countries have been incorporating this understanding into their efforts for some time. But because suicide prevention in the U.S. has historically been seen as a medical issue – the responsibility of clinicians who can provide medication or therapy – economic solutions are frequently left out of the equation.

Some advocates and people with suicidal experiences, like Scott, are trying to change that. They say traditional approaches to suicide prevention haven't succeeded. For decades, the U.S. has had one of the highest suicide rates among high-income countries.

To move the needle, "we all need to be challenged to broaden our aperture, to broaden the lens of what is mental health," said Benjamin Miller, a national expert in mental health policy and an adjunct professor at the Stanford University School of Medicine.

The highest-impact interventions may not be adding crisis lines or screening more people in emergency rooms, Miller said, though those can be helpful. If he had to pick one strategy, it would be alleviating poverty.

That "allows us to reconcile and solve for these conditions that put people in places of despair," he said. "I don't know what stronger intervention one could possibly have."

To be sure, suicides also occur among wealthy people. It's a complex issue and almost never boils down to one reason. For most people, the decision to hurt themselves results from an intricate interplay of biological factors, relationship concerns, finances, trauma or abuse, and access to lethal means. That means suicide prevention requires a variety of approaches.

Janna Mach / TNS

Kacy Maitland is the chief clinical officer at Samaritans, a Boston-based nonprofit that has operated a suicide crisis hotline for more than 50 years and fields upward of 10,000 calls a month.

The argument for including economic policy as one of those approaches, many advocates and researchers say, is that policies affect entire populations. So even a small effect can save a significant number of lives.

'Economic uncertainty' builds

However, the push for an economic lens on suicide prevention is encountering gale-force headwinds from Trump administration policies.

Unpredictable tariff actions and the war with Iran have contributed to economic pressures. Meanwhile, the administration has increased hurdles for safety net programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, often called food stamps, and Medicaid, the state-federal health insurance program for low-income people. Experts estimate millions of people will lose these benefits over the coming years.

The administration has also objected to certain housing programs, saying people who are homeless should have to enter treatment or get jobs to receive support. The president's 2027 budget request, which signals his priorities, calls for cutting a program that helps low-income people pay for heat and air conditioning.

Research suggests these types of conditions increase people's risk for suicide.

"Anytime there is economic uncertainty, people will fear for their future and livelihood," Miller said, and "this last few months have been terrifying."

Notably, the administration's actions directly contradict strategies that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website promotes as having "the best available evidence to reduce suicide." No. 1 on the page is "Strengthen economic supports." It lists SNAP benefits and housing-first policies as examples.

Allison Arwady, director of the CDC's injury center, said the agency doesn't work on economic policy directly but encourages state and local governments to look at the relationship between health and economics.

The Department of Health and Human Services supports suicide prevention through the 988 national crisis hotline, investments in treatment, and the Rural Health Transformation Program, which states can use to expand mental health care in rural areas, HHS spokesperson Emily Hilliard said.

Alec Varsamis, a spokesperson for the Agriculture Department, said the agency is providing states guidance on SNAP changes and "remains deeply committed to supporting the health and mental well-being of all Americans."

It's too soon to tell how recent actions may affect suicide rates. And given the unique combination of factors at play in each death, it's challenging to draw direct causal links.

The most recent data available shows nearly 49,000 people died by suicide in 2024 – a slight dip from previous years but still among the highest tolls since the late 1990s.

The concept of suicide prevention writ large has historically drawn bipartisan support, said Jonathan Purtle, a New York University researcher who published a paper last year highlighting public policies shown to reduce suicide.

The details are where things get murky. For example, strong evidence suggests that increasing the minimum wage reduces suicides. (The federal minimum wage is $7.25 per hour, with higher rates in certain states.) But such increases are often a hard sell for lawmakers facing the realities of balancing a budget and small-business owners struggling to stay afloat.

Closely tying suicide prevention initiatives to such politically charged and complicated issues could undermine their chances, Purtle said, adding, "We'll see suicide get polarized."

That's why the focus often stays on areas of agreement, such as funding crisis hotlines.

View from a crisis line

Kacy Maitland is the chief clinical officer at Samaritans, a Boston-based nonprofit that has operated a suicide crisis hotline for more than 50 years and fields upward of 10,000 calls a month, including local calls to 988.

Although people might assume every call is an imminent crisis, Maitland said, many callers are struggling with everyday needs – financial problems, housing concerns, or unemployment.

"Whatever is going on in the world, we absolutely hear about that in real time," Maitland said.

In November, when SNAP benefits were delayed during a government shutdown, people affected called Samaritans.

"That in and of itself was a hit to suicide prevention," Maitland said. "If people don't have access to eat, to feed their children, to be alive, quite frankly, how are they able to move further through anything else?"

Samaritans volunteers are trained to listen with compassion and make callers feel less alone in what they're going through. That validation and caring are powerful, Maitland said.

But she often wants to do more, to "dig in and fix" the root issue.

Research supports her instincts. One study found that increasing the number of people who receive SNAP benefits by 5 percent could have prevented nearly 32,000 suicides over 15 years. And a $1 increase in minimum wage has been linked to roughly 8,000 fewer suicide deaths over a decade.

Although Maitland can't change federal welfare policies, she and her co-workers are applying this approach locally. They recently started an initiative to provide blankets, socks, and water to people living on the streets of Boston.

"Suicide prevention doesn't always look like a crisis helpline," she said. "That's what we imagine it as." But "having your basic needs is also a form of suicide prevention."

Continuing to live

In the years since calling the suicide hotline in high school, Scott has turned to a number of resources to help overcome recurring thoughts of suicide. Crisis lines, hospitalization, medication, and therapy have all played a role.

But, Scott said, the biggest impact came from programs that helped fulfill daily needs – for example, a housing program for LGBTQ+ youths and another for former foster care children attending college.

Scott, who now lives close to campus because of the foster care program, said the ability not to "worry about 'Where am I going to sleep tomorrow night?'" has provided a significant mental health boost.

Although some programs like those are under threat from the Trump administration, Scott is hopeful they will persist and rebuild.

Surviving difficult times has given Scott confidence to persist through more potential challenges ahead.

Despite "the policies and legislation that harm us, we continue to live, and I think that's really important," Scott said. "It gives me a lot of hope that things can be different."

KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF – the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.

More Information

If you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental health crisis, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing or texting "988."

FOCUS

Justin Sullivan / Getty Images / TNS

In an aerial view, San Francisco Department of Public Works worker Chris Solorzano uses a grading rake to smooth over asphalt as he repairs a pot hole on March 24, 2023.

THE HOLE PROBLEM

Those potholes in your street reveal funding challenges for cities and states

By AMANDA WATFORD
Stateline.org (TNS)

Across the country, potholes are more than a seasonal nuisance. They are a visible symptom of aging roads and bridges that many state and local governments say they cannot afford to fully maintain.

From local streets in small towns to major urban corridors, transportation agencies are grappling with deferred maintenance, rising construction costs and limited revenue streams. Even as federal infrastructure dollars increased in recent years, some transportation officials and infrastructure experts say the need continues to outpace available funding.

Gas taxes, which historically have largely gone to road repairs, have not kept up with inflation or shifts in vehicle efficiency, including the growing use of fuel-efficient and electric vehicles. The federal gas tax, at 18.4 cents per gallon, has remained unchanged since 1993. President Donald Trump has proposed temporarily suspending the federal gas tax to provide relief from surging fuel prices because of the Iran war.

"What states end up doing, partly because resources are limited, is they're sort of triaging the system," said Rocky Moretti, the director of policy and research at TRIP, a nonprofit research group focused on transportation issues.

For drivers, the cost of deteriorating roads often becomes clear only after damage occurs. At a time when many Americans are already feeling squeezed by fluctuating gas prices, tire blowouts, bent rims and suspension repairs can turn potholes into costly and unexpected expenses.

At the same time, some state and local governments are struggling to keep up with repairs while exploring new technologies – including artificial intelligence-powered road monitoring systems, sensors and camera-equipped vehicles – to identify road damage and respond more efficiently.

Federal transportation data shows that U.S. road conditions have changed little over the past three decades. Nationwide, the share of roadways rated in acceptable condition peaked at about 91 percent in 1999, but has since declined and averaged around 80 percent in recent years – leaving roughly 1 in 5 roadways in poor condition.

In 2024, the latest year with available data, the share of road miles rated in poor condition ranged from 34 percent to 89 percent in the five states or jurisdictions with the worst roads: the District of Columbia, Rhode Island, Hawaii, California and New Mexico. By comparison, the share of roads rated in acceptable condition ranged from 94 percent to 97 percent in the five best-performing states: Kansas, Tennessee, Indiana, Wyoming and Vermont.

With spring bringing warmer weather and heavier traffic, many transportation agencies have ramped up seasonal repair efforts by launching "pothole blitzes" aimed at rapidly filling road damage ahead of the busy summer driving season.

Just last month, West Virginia Republican Gov. Patrick Morrisey pledged to have potholes across the state filled by the end of May, saying road crews had already patched more than 18,000 miles of potholes since January.

New York City also hit a milestone in April, filling 100,000 potholes in the first 100 days under Mayor Zohran Mamdani. New Yorkers called in at least 19,406 reports flagging potholes in fiscal 2026 through April, up roughly 88 percent from at least 10,297 reports during the same period in fiscal 2025, according to the city's 311 data.

In Baltimore, crews filled at least 32,000 potholes from late February through mid-March, and the city aims to fill another 25,000 potholes and resurface 10 lane miles by mid-July, according to Veronica McBeth, the director of the Baltimore City Department of Transportation. The agency repaired more than 134,000 potholes in 2025, she said.

"(Potholes are) one of those things that is a real pain," McBeth said. "City services are out here trying to get the work done, and we are actively trying to grow deeper partnerships with the state to get larger pots of money to do bigger and more robust infrastructure investments."

> **"The last thing you want to do is try to save a buck here and there, kind of kick the can down the road, and pushing the maintenance back. It turns out, it's less expensive to do light maintenance more often."**
>
> **BILL BUTTLAR**
> Professor of civil and environmental engineering, University of Missouri

A growing maintenance gap

Potholes form when water seeps into cracks in pavement, freezes and expands, then melts and leaves gaps beneath the road surface. As vehicles repeatedly drive over those weakened areas the pavement breaks apart, creating potholes. The cycle is especially common in regions with frequent freeze-thaw weather swings.

"Years of that combination of traffic and climate action will cause you to have to do maintenance. Things will break down," said Bill Buttlar, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Missouri.

Poor drainage is also a major factor, Buttlar said, as moisture and stormwater can significantly weaken pavement over time. The aging transportation systems in many parts of the country can make the problem even worse, as older roads are often more vulnerable to cracking and deterioration.

Responsibility for repairing potholes depends on who maintains the roadway. Local streets are often maintained by city or county public works departments, while state departments of transportation typically oversee highways and major roads.

Many agencies rely heavily on resident complaints submitted through 311 systems or online reporting tools to identify new potholes, alongside routine inspections and maintenance crews.

State and local governments increasingly rely on a patchwork of federal funding and local revenue sources to cover maintenance costs. Research from The Pew Charitable Trusts found that state roadways face a combined maintenance and repair shortfall of $86.3 billion over the next decade.

"(Transportation agencies) don't have the budget to do proper maintenance practices and stay out ahead of things, just with the increase of costs and the lack of funding that we've been putting into the roads as a nation over the last 30 years," said Richard Willis of the National Asphalt Pavement Association. Willis is the industry group's vice president for engineering, research and technology.

The lack of funding often creates a cycle of reactive maintenance, according to experts. Delaying repairs can worsen deterioration as water continues penetrating cracks and weakening pavement foundations, leading to more costly reconstruction later.

"The last thing you want to do is try to save a buck here and there, kind of kick the can down the road, and pushing the maintenance back," Buttlar said. "It turns out, it's less expensive to do light maintenance more often."

Innovative tools

Some states and cities are turning to technology to stretch maintenance dollars further.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, City Councilor Satya Mitra said he wants the city to become the "city with no potholes." Since joining the council earlier this year, Mitra said he has heard repeated concerns from residents about road safety and infrastructure conditions and is pushing for the city's transportation officials to explore whether artificial intelligence could help detect potholes earlier.

"It is not only the damage to our vehicle that happens, but also it is a potential health risk," Mitra told Stateline. To underscore how seriously he takes the issue, Mitra even made a T-shirt that reads, "Proud to live in Worcester, a city with no potholes," which he said he would like to distribute to residents if the city reaches that goal.

Worcester is far from alone. Transportation agencies across the country are increasingly experimenting with AI-powered cameras, sensors and predictive software to identify road damage before it worsens. Supporters say the technology can help agencies prioritize repairs, respond faster and potentially reduce long-term maintenance costs. But for many cities already struggling with limited budgets, the systems can also come with significant upfront costs.

Recently, Chicago announced a partnership with tech company Samsara to test artificial intelligence tools designed to improve road operations. The system will use sensors and video technology to detect and log potholes.

Similar technology is also being tested in more than a handful Massachusetts communities through a pilot program using pothole detection software.

In Hawaii, the state Department of Transportation has expanded its "Eyes on the Road" initiative, which relies on volunteer drivers equipped with free dash cameras to collect roadway footage statewide.

Last year, San Jose, California, released results from an AI-powered road safety pilot project that found the technology identified potholes with 97 percent accuracy and roadway debris with 88 percent accuracy. The pilot, launched in 2023, uses cameras mounted on city vehicles to detect potholes, illegal dumping and other infrastructure problems.

In recent years, some municipalities have upgraded their 311 systems with mobile apps, photo uploads and GPS-based reporting tools aimed at making them easier and faster to use.

But some researchers warn that complaint-based systems can leave behind communities that are less likely to engage with local government reporting tools. A 2024 study published in the Policy Studies Journal found that in Houston, lower-income neighborhoods and communities with larger Black and Hispanic populations submitted fewer 311 pothole complaints despite often having worse road conditions.

Rather than waiting for roads to deteriorate into major reconstruction projects, focusing on preventive measures such as crack sealing, resurfacing and rapid pothole patching could help more. Experts say addressing smaller problems early can extend the lifespan of roads, reduce long-term repair costs and help prevent more dangerous driving conditions.

"If we invest in maintaining what we have, that's the most effective way to preclude the formation of potholes," said George Conner, the deputy director for operations at the Alabama Department of Transportation. Conner also serves as the chair of the committee on maintenance with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

"A prioritized overall preservation is probably the best starting point. But there is no single fix for potholes, especially if you want the repair to last," Conner said.

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Getty Images

Should you get a second medical opinion?

A surgeon explains why doing so can make you a more confident patient

By DANIELLE FRIEDMAN
Quinnipiac University (The Conversation)

Imagine you have heartburn. For years you've managed with antacids, but one day you're struggling to swallow steak without vomiting. Your gastroenterologist finds a large hiatal hernia, an enlarged opening of the diaphragm trapping part of your stomach. She sends you to a surgeon, who says a surgical procedure will correct the problem but could permanently alter your digestion.

This is your first time hearing that surgery might help you, and you're just not sure: Should you follow the surgeon's advice?

As a surgeon focusing on specialized esophagus and stomach procedures, I often treat patients who may want to seek a second opinion. I'm often asked to provide second opinions, too.

Seeking a second opinion is a patient's right, and it is widely accepted in medical practice today. But it can also feel daunting. You may worry about offending your physician or making them feel you don't trust them. And it's not always clear whether your condition, or a treatment the doctor recommends, is straightforward or more complicated. Getting a second opinion also takes additional time and energy.

Understanding the origins of second opinions, how they are used today and what steps you can take to decide whether you should obtain one can help you navigate your care with more confidence.

A brief history of the second opinion

Through the turn of the 20th century, physicians generally embraced a one-way view of the doctor-patient relationship in which they wielded the medical knowledge and technical expertise and decided what treatments best served their patients. But in the early to mid-20th century, a growing recognition of the principles of patient rights and autonomy began to emerge alongside the modern foundation of medical ethics.

In the wake of Nazi atrocities during World War II, the Nuremberg Code and later the Belmont Report established protections for human research subjects. A series of landmark legal cases required doctors to discuss the risks and benefits of surgical procedures with their patients and obtain informed consent – a term introduced in 1957.

As respect for patient autonomy grew, so too did an emphasis on patient advocacy and empowerment. In 1972, researchers at Cornell University Medical College launched the first known surgical second opinion program. Collaborating with insurance companies, they made sure patients could obtain a second surgical consultation before any planned procedure. More than 7,000 patients participated in the program in its first six years – and 28 percent of them declined the original treatment plan after obtaining a second opinion.

Today, most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, provide coverage for second opinions regarding surgical care, serious injury or illness – especially cancer. Patients may still be responsible for a percentage of the cost, so anyone considering a second opinion may want to check their plan's benefits.

The value of a second opinion

One type of second opinion initiated by doctors when required by insurance companies or hospital protocols is called a mandatory second opinion. It is most often seen in cancer care, where doctors at some smaller hospitals routinely collaborate with specialists in larger national cancer centers on a broad range of questions, from confirming a diagnosis to selecting the right medications.

Routine second opinions confirming biopsy findings, for example, resulted in major diagnosis changes in about

THE CONVERSATION

7.5 percent of patients, one study showed. Other studies found that this type of second opinion changed the interpretation of imaging scans or overturned a decision about undergoing surgery, about one-third of the time.

Patients, on the other hand, may have different reasons for requesting second opinions. For example, they may want to find a doctor with more experience with their health condition, or someone who communicates in a way that is clearer to them. Patients might also seek a second opinion if they are experiencing symptoms that are difficult to fit into one clear diagnosis.

Sometimes, a patient with complications or poor results from a prior treatment may need guidance. Or, if a doctor is recommending a course of action that is invasive, has a high risk of side effects or might affect long-term quality of life, a second opinion may boost a patient's confidence in that course or provide an alternative.

When patients seek a second opinion regarding a cancer diagnosis, they make major changes to their treatment plan in up to 42 percent of cases, according to one study. For more common issues such as fatigue or abdominal pain, a second opinion might yield a new diagnosis only 10 percent of the time, but 70 percent of patients receive advice they find helpful.

It's not clear whether patients who obtain a second opinion are more likely to complete a particular treatment – but getting another perspective often leads patients to feel more satisfied, confident and informed in their care.

Tips for navigating a second opinion

Hopefully, knowing how empowering second opinions can be both for patients and clinicians can help you feel less guilty or awkward asking for one. Here are a few proactive steps you can take to help you decide whether to seek a second opinion – and to streamline the process if you do.

Plan ahead. Contact your insurance company in advance – if possible, even before your first visit about your concern. The insurer can tell you about your coverage for any specialty care you may need and whether a second opinion would be covered under your policy.

Come prepared to maximize your appointment. Before your initial visit, think through how you'll take notes. Bringing a trusted friend or relative to your appointment may make this easier. Start a running list of questions you can update as they occur to you.

This can help focus your concerns and make the most of your time with the first provider. If you decide to seek a second opinion, this documentation can also define key points you may want clarified or confirmed.

Gauge your comfort with the initial provider's expertise with your symptoms or condition. Questions you might ask include: Is this a rare or common diagnosis? Are my symptoms typical? Is this a procedure or treatment typically carried out by providers with special training? How often do you perform this procedure or treat this illness? How often are patients with my condition treated at your hospital?

Ask whether the provider has any printed information, research studies or reliable websites they can share to reinforce your discussion.

If you have a rare diagnosis, unusual symptoms or are seeing a provider who doesn't frequently treat your condition, a second opinion may be more likely to improve your care.

Think about the quality of provider-patient communication. Were all your questions answered? Did the visit feel rushed? Was your provider a good listener? If the visit fell short, either in terms of time or communication, a second opinion can help you feel heard and understood, and demystify points of confusion.

On the other hand, if the discussion was clear and left you feeling confident in your care, but you would still feel more comfortable with another perspective, you can be honest with the doctor about it. Providing feedback to your initial physician is often helpful in maintaining a positive and trusting relationship. Many patients choose to return to their first clinician after exploring other options.

Pin down the time frame for a second opinion. Ask the provider you initially see whether the diagnosis or recommended treatment is urgent or time sensitive. Some medical and surgical treatments must be scheduled weeks or months in advance, while others are more flexible. Confirming this time frame helps your doctor plan ahead, but more importantly it helps you figure out how much time you have to consider your alternatives without delaying needed treatment.

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ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

TOXOPLASMOSIS:

Protecting yourself and your baby during pregnancy

Pregnant women who own cats need to take a few more precautions due to toxoplasmosis, an infection caused by a microscopic parasite that pet can pass on. Getty Images

By MEGAN YANNY, M.D., FAAP and KEDAR TILAK, M.D., FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

If you're pregnant, you may have been asked by medical professionals questions like, "Do you have a cat?" This comes from concern about toxoplasmosis, an infection caused by a microscopic parasite that cats can pass on.

You don't have to surrender your beloved pet if you become pregnant, but there is some information to keep in mind to ensure safety for yourself and your child throughout your pregnancy.

Toxoplasmosis is caused by the parasite Toxoplasma gondii. Cats, both domestic and wild, are the only animals in which the parasite can complete its full life cycle. The parasite's eggs, called oocysts, are shed in cat stool and can contaminate soil, water and food.

Most people who become infected never develop symptoms, but if a person becomes infected for the first time during pregnancy or shortly before conceiving, the parasite can cross the placenta and infect the fetus. This is called congenital toxoplasmosis.

If a fetus becomes infected, toxoplasmosis can lead to a range of health problems, including premature birth, low birth weight, jaundice or other liver problems, abnormal blood counts, rashes, eye disease, developmental delays, seizures, brain calcification, and in extreme cases, stillbirth.

Some babies show no symptoms at birth but may develop complications months or years later. Your OB-GYN or pediatrician can discuss testing and treatment options if exposure is suspected.

Most adults including pregnant people either have no symptoms or experience mild, flu-like illness such as fever, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, and muscle or joint aches. If you're pregnant and worried you may have been exposed, contact your doctor promptly. They can help determine whether testing or treatment is needed.

Cats play an important role in spreading parasites, but you don't need to give up your cat. If you are planning on keeping your cat, there are things to keep in mind that can limit your exposure.

Cats become infected by eating raw meat, birds, mice or contaminated soil, and only cats that are actively shedding parasites in their stool can spread it. That period of active parasite shedding is typically short. Additionally indoor cats fed commercial cat food are much less likely to be infected.

To keep yourself safe living with your cat while pregnant, avoid changing the litter box if at all possible. If not, be sure to wear gloves and wash your hands after. Changing litter daily can also limit exposure as toxoplasma eggs need 1 to 5 days to become infectious.

Most infections actually come from food, not cats. You can reduce your risk by following safe food and water practices such as washing all fruits and vegetables, cooking meat and shellfish thoroughly, washing hands when cooking with raw meat, and keeping cutting boards clean and sanitized.

Because the eggs can survive in the soil as well, wear gloves when gardening and wash hands after outdoor activities. If you have a sandbox, be sure to cover it so cats don't inadvertently use it as a litter box and potentially deposit parasites.

Toxoplasmosis is common, but there are straightforward ways to protect yourself and your baby. Safe food handling, good hygiene and avoiding contact with cat stool can significantly reduce your risk. If you're pregnant and have concerns about toxoplasmosis, reach out to your healthcare provider. They can guide you on testing, treatment, and steps to keep your pregnancy healthy.

Kedar Tilak, M.D., FAAP, is board-certified in pediatrics and is currently in a combined fellowship training program in neonatology and pediatric infectious diseases at children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. Dr. Tilak's interests include clinical research, newborn sepsis, antibiotic stewardship in NICU and travel medicine.

Megan Yanny, M.D., FAAP, is a board-certified general pediatrician and Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. Dr Yanny is involved in medical student and resident education and is a member of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Eased rule on psychedelics could aid veterans

Aims to help with anxiety and depression

By KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

Federal regulators fast-tracked approval of psychedelic drugs to treat some of the nation's most stubborn mental health disorders, reopening a debate that has lingered since the counterculture era: Are hallucinogens dangerous drugs of abuse, breakthrough medicines, or both?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced in April that it would accelerate reviews of several psychedelic compounds aimed at treating severe depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and alcoholism – conditions that often resist conventional treatments. The agency granted fast-track incentives for companies studying psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression and methylone for PTSD, while also approving an early-stage clinical study of ibogaine, a psychoactive substance derived from the African iboga plant, for alcoholism.

The move reflects a dramatic shift in federal thinking. Once grouped with harmful drugs like heroin and cocaine with a high risk of abuse and no medical use, psychedelics are increasingly being treated as a distinct class of substances with unusually low addiction potential and growing evidence of therapeutic value.

"Depression and PTSD also result in death, quite often, especially for veterans," said Andrew Coop, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy and chair of Maryland's Task Force on Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances. Coop said the FDA's actions effectively extend a "right-to-try" philosophy – originally designed for terminal cancer patients seeking experimental drugs – to people suffering from severe psychiatric illness.

The urgency is fueled in part by the limitations of existing treatments.

Psychiatrist Dr. Scott Aaronson of the Sheppard Pratt Institute for Advanced Diagnostics and Therapeutics said psychedelic therapies are drawing attention because they appear capable of helping people with extreme, treatment-resistant depression, including patients who experience suicidal thoughts daily.

"These are people who have often exhausted every other option," Aaronson said.

Yet the emerging science suggests psychedelic drugs may not resemble traditional psychiatric medications at all, he said. Unlike antidepressants, which regulate neurochemistry over time, psychedelics appear to temporarily increase brain connectivity and psychological flexibility, potentially creating a window in which therapy can produce lasting changes.

That distinction has created a deepening divide among researchers. One school of thought argues that the psychedelic experience itself – the hallucinations, emotional breakthroughs and altered states of consciousness commonly called "trips" – is essential to healing. Another argues that the compounds may eventually provide benefits independent of the hallucinatory experience.

A new study published May 5 in Nature Communications appears to strengthen the first argument.

Getty Images

Researchers studying 28 psychedelic-naive participants found measurable changes in brain anatomy and function lasting from one hour to one month after a single high dose of psilocybin. Participants also reported increases in cognitive flexibility, psychological insight and well-being after one month. Importantly, researchers found that the intensity of the psychedelic experience appeared tied to the degree of benefit.

For advocates of psychedelic-assisted therapy, the findings support the idea that the drugs cannot simply be reduced to chemical mood enhancers.

"It's more than neurochemistry," Aaronson said. "They make the brain more amenable to change."

But he argues the setting matters as much as the substance. Psychedelics, he said, work best in a structured therapeutic environment where patients are prepared for emotionally difficult experiences and guided afterward in processing them.

For PTSD patients, especially, sessions can involve traumatic memories resurfacing with unusual intensity. Therapists and session monitors are often trained to respond reactively rather than directing the experience itself, helping patients interpret difficult moments instead of steering them away.

"It's a different role for the therapist than most are used to," Aaronson said. At the same time, "it's especially satisfying work because you can see profound gains in days and weeks rather than months and years."

Researchers say the drugs also raise concerns.

While psychedelics are considered far less addictive than opioids or stimulants, doctors worry they may trigger psychiatric disorders in vulnerable people with family histories of schizophrenia or other psychotic illnesses.

Aaronson compared the risk to concerns surrounding heavy THC use, which some psychiatrists view as a "stress test" for latent mental illness.

That caution partly explains why federal regulators remain careful despite the accelerating momentum. In 2024, the FDA rejected an application by Lykos Therapeutics for MDMA-assisted PTSD therapy, citing concerns over study design and data reliability.

The challenge, Aaronson said, is that the nation's drug approval system was built around predictable pharmaceutical effects, not transformative psychological experiences that are difficult to measure in conventional clinical trials. Double-blind studies – the gold standard of medical research – become complicated when patients can usually tell whether they have received a psychedelic or a placebo.

Standard depression scales may also fail to capture some of the changes patients describe, including reduced existential despair, improved relationships or a renewed sense of meaning.

"People get better in ways we don't always measure," Aaronson said.

The legal questions extend beyond medicine.

Maryland's psychedelic task force is examining whether the state should eventually allow broader supervised use or even commercial sales, similar to the path to cannabis legalization. Coop said the group has recommended a cautious, stepwise approach beginning with tightly controlled therapeutic applications.

Support for that strategy appears to be growing nationally. Surveys show Americans are increasingly open to the medical use of psychedelics, particularly for veterans and patients with severe mental illness.

Still, advocates warn against moving too quickly.

"I'd like to speed up the process," Aaronson said, "but not too much."

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Getty Images

Seeking stroke care when *minutes matter*

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK
(TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: Many in my social circle are now at the age when we're more likely to have a stroke. What symptoms should we watch for? And what happens if someone has a stroke?

ANSWER: If you're 55 or older, you're at greater risk of stroke. A stroke is a medical emergency. It happens when either the blood supply to the brain is blocked or a blood vessel in the brain leaks or bursts. In both cases, brain cells begin to die in minutes, so it can be life-changing to recognize the symptoms in your friends and family.

Stroke risks

In addition to age, lifestyle factors ranging from being overweight, physical inactivity, heavy drinking, smoking or being exposed to secondhand smoke and using illegal drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine can contribute to your stroke risk.

There also are medical conditions that increase your stroke risk, including:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Cardiovascular disease
- Personal or family history of stroke or heart attack
- COVID-19 infection
- Taking birth control pills or hormone therapy

Men are at higher risk, as are African American and Hispanic people. Women are more likely to die of a stroke than men.

Time is critical

The American Stroke and Heart Association has created an easy way to remember stroke symptoms: BE FAST.

Because time is critical when a person has a stroke, call 911 for immediate care and transportation to an emergency department. However, if you're living in a rural area, too much time may elapse before help arrives. Give the person one tablet of aspirin, preferably a low-dose aspirin (about 81 mg), then quickly drive them to the closest emergency department. Tell staff that you suspect a stroke.

If your medical facility doesn't have a comprehensive or primary stroke center, the healthcare team may connect via audio-video technology (telestroke) with a stroke neurologist who can examine the patient and recommend treatment options.

Treatment

Treatments have advanced significantly in the past 30 years. The first breakthrough was the development of clot-busting medications that can dissolve the clot that's blocking blood flow in the blood vessel. For the best outcomes, patients are carefully selected for this treatment.

For some patients, endovascular intervention is a newer and additional treatment option. It's typically performed within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms. A CT or MRI scan of the blood vessel can pinpoint the blood clot. Using guided imagery, a neurointerventionist threads a thin wire up through an artery in the groin to the brain, grasps the clot, removes it and opens the affected blood vessel.

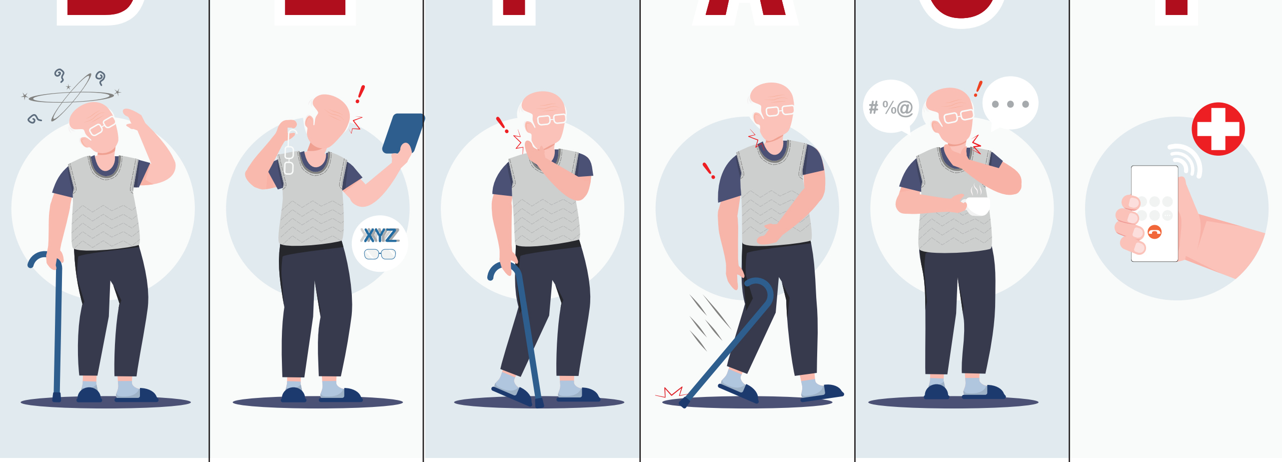
In addition to treatments, other factors contribute to better recovery from stroke while patients are in the hospital. These include controlling their blood pressure, ensuring their blood sugar is neither too high nor too low, and maintaining a comfortable body temperature – not too hot or too cold. Their care team will develop a recovery plan for them once they return home.

Significant strides also have been made to ensure patients don't have another stroke. These include controlling blood pressure and diabetes and treating obstructive sleep apnea. Patients also typically are prescribed a blood thinner to reduce the chance of clots forming. New developments in these medications, such as apixaban, make them simpler to take without regular blood tests.

On the horizon is the formulation of medications called neuroprotective agents that reduce the catastrophic effects on the brain caused by inflammation when a stroke occurs. But the research and studies in this area continue.

The best stroke care is still avoiding a stroke by reducing your risks. But if a stroke happens, remember: BE FAST.

Felix Chukwudelunzu, M.D., Vascular Neurologist, Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire and Menomonie, Wisconsin



B	E	F	A	S	T
BALANCE OR COORDINATION. Sudden onset of walking like you're intoxicated, and not being able to grasp or turn a doorknob with one of your hands, are just two examples.	**EYE.** Sudden onset of double vision, loss of vision in one or both eyes, or not being able to see the full visual field can indicate a stroke.	**FACE.** Sudden onset of one side of your face drooping. A limb on that same side also may become weak.	**ARM.** Sudden onset of weakness or complete paralysis in one arm or leg. One way to test for arm weakness is to have the person hold both arms straight out in front of them. Be concerned if one arm begins to drift downward on its own.	**SPEECH.** Sudden onset of slurred speech, or trouble finding words or speaking gibberish.	**TIME.** It's estimated that a person loses 1.6 to 2 million brain cells every minute when blood supply to the brain is affected, so time is brain.

MAYO CLINIC MINUTE

Know the risk factors to prevent stroke

(TNS) — Stroke can happen anywhere to anyone. In the U.S., someone has a stroke every 40 seconds. And Mayo Clinic experts say knowing the risk factors of stroke can help prevent long-term disability and even death. Learn more.

"Close to 90 percent of all strokes are preventable," says Dr. Felix Chukwudelunzu, a Mayo Clinic neurologist.

The first step in stroke prevention is recognizing the risk factors.

"There are those that are modifiable and those that are nonmodifiable. Certain nonmodifiable would be age," says Dr. James Klaas, a Mayo Clinic neurologist.

The older you are, the greater the chance of having a stroke.

"If you're above the age of 65, you're more likely to have a stroke than someone in their 20s or 30s, for example," says Dr. Chukwudelunzu.

Another nonmodifiable risk factor is family history of stroke – especially a first-degree relative.

"In terms of the modifiable risk factors, what we'd be looking for is high blood pressure – is probably the most significant – then we look for high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, amongst others," says Dr. Klaas.

Maintaining physical activity and watching what you eat are both important factors in stroke prevention.

"We know that people that eat, for example, high-salt diet, they are more likely to have high blood pressure than people that don't. So dietary changes can also help reduce chances of a stroke," says Chukwudelunzu. "Identifying these risk factors and making sure that they're being treated appropriately goes a long way into preventing that stroke from happening in the first place."

– Mayo Clinic News Network

Getty Images

FOOD

2 Guinness recipes you can eat instead of sip

By GRETCHEN McKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Most of the time, Guinness is enjoyed exactly how Arthur Guinness envisioned it when he started brewing the dark-colored but light-bodied Irish dry stout more than 200 years ago: in a pint glass with its signature creamy head.

But it also can be the surprise ingredient in any number of dishes, including savory stews and grilling or braising sauces.

Its rich and coffee-like malted flavors also complement sharp cheddar and bittersweet chocolate, ingredients many of us have in the fridge or pantry at any given moment.

These two recipes demonstrate how the world's best-selling stout can elevate two everyday American dishes – a creamy pot of mac and cheese and a pan of rich and fudgy brownies.

Both are quite easy to pull together and gain a touch of unexpected umami from the beer. Most of the alcohol will burn off during cooking but neither is completely alcohol-free.

Guinness Stout adds deep, malty flavor to mac and cheese.
Gretchen McKay / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette / TNS

Guinness Mac and Cheese

Serves 6

This flavorful super-easy stovetop mac and cheese is made with Guinness stout, sharp Irish cheddar and a touch of Dijon mustard. It's creamy and cheesy with an optional crunchy breadcrumb topping. Best part: It takes only about 20 minutes.

FOR TOPPING:
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3/4 cup breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh Italian parsley

FOR MAC AND CHEESE:
- 2 1/4 teaspoons salt, divided
- 1 pound elbow macaroni
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup Guinness stout
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1/ cup half and half
- A few grinds of black pepper
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 3 ounces cream cheese, cut into pieces
- 3 3/4 cups grated Irish cheddar cheese

Begin by making the topping: In a medium skillet, melt 1 tablespoon of butter.

Add minced garlic and cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Do not brown the garlic! Add breadcrumbs and cook on low heat until they turn a golden brown. Next, add the Italian parsley. That's it – transfer the topping from the skillet into a bowl and set aside.

Bring a pot of water to a boil. When the water is boiling, add 2 teaspoons of salt. Cook the elbow macaroni until it's al dente.

Remove 1 cup of the pasta water and set it aside (you'll need this later when you're making the sauce). Drain and rinse the pasta, then set it aside while you prepare the sauce.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Once it's melted, whisk in flour. Whisk for 1 minute to create a roux for the sauce.

Continue to whisk as you slowly add Guinness stout, followed by milk, half and half, remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt, black pepper and Dijon mustard.

Bring to a simmer and cook, whisking now and then, until the sauce thickens. This will take about 2 minutes.

Add cream cheese and 2 1/2 cups of grated cheese. Stir the mixture until the cheeses are incorporated.

Add cooked pasta followed by the remaining 1 1/4 cup grated cheese. Stir gently until the remaining cheese is melted and the pasta is heated through. Since the mac and cheese does not go in the oven, it is essential that the pasta is reheated in the sauce. If the sauce seems too thick, drizzle in a little bit of the reserved pasta water.

Place the hot mac and cheese in a serving bowl and sprinkle on the topping. It's time to dig in!

– marydisomma.com

Brownies made with Guinness Stout.

Guinness Brownies

Makes 16-20 brownies

These Guinness brownies are made from reduced Guinness stout. They're fudgy, rich and topped with espresso- and Guinness-infused frosting.

FOR BROWNIES:
- 1 12-ounce bottle Guinness Draught Stout
- 3/4 cup unsalted butter
- 8 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon espresso powder

FOR FROSTING:
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2–3 tablespoons reduced Guinness
- 1 teaspoon espresso powder
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

In a small saucepan, bring the Guinness to a boil over medium-high heat. Once boiling, reduce to medium heat and allow to simmer until reduced down to 2/3 cup, about 12–15 minutes. Set aside to cool for at least 10 minutes. You will use 1/2 cup in the brownies and the rest in the frosting.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease a 9-inch square baking pan or line with aluminum foil or parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the sides to lift the finished brownies out (makes cutting easier!). Set aside.

Place butter and chopped chocolate in a large microwave-safe bowl. Melt in 30-second increments, whisking after each, until completely smooth.

Whisk in the sugar and 1/2 cup of reduced Guinness until completely combined. Whisk in the eggs and vanilla extract.

Finally, whisk in the flour, salt, and espresso powder (if using). The batter will be thick and shiny. Pour/spread evenly into prepared pan.

Bake for 32 minutes, then test the brownies with a toothpick. Insert it into the center of the pan. If it comes out coated with wet batter, the brownies need more time. If there are only a few moist crumbs, the brownies are done.

Remove from the oven and place on a cooling rack to cool completely in the pan before frosting or cutting.

Make the frosting: In a large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, beat the butter on high speed until completely smooth and creamy, about 2–3 minutes. Add the confectioners' sugar, beating on low at first then increasing to high speed.

Once creamy and combined, beat in 2 tablespoons of reduced Guinness, the espresso powder, vanilla extract, and salt. Taste. Add the remaining reduced Guinness if needed. If you want the frosting a little thinner, beat in a splash of milk.

When cool, lift the brownies out by gripping the parchment overhangs and transfer to a cutting board. Spread frosting over cooled brownies. Use a sharp knife to cut into squares.

Cover and store leftover brownies at room temperature for up to 1 week.

– sallysbakingaddiction.com

GRETCHEN'S TABLE

Yogurt chicken with Indian raita, coriander chutney and rotis

By GRETCHEN McKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Indian food is among the tastiest and most aromatic in the world, thanks to its vibrant mix of warm spices and reliance on so many fresh herbs.

But it also has a reputation for being a labor-intensive cuisine because so many dishes require slow cooking or time-consuming techniques to build flavors. Others require a raft of spices and pounding of pastes.

"The Great British Bake Off" contestant and author Chetna Makan's latest cookbook aims to make Indian food more accessible by making a wide array of recipes really easy.

In "Chetna's 5-Ingredient Indian: Delicious Recipes Made Easy" (Hamlyn, $33), the Jabalpur native delivers more than 90 recipes for fish, chicken, rice and vegetarian dishes along with simple breads, sweet and tangy chutneys, crunchy snacks and sweets.

Here's the hook: Not counting the occasional pinch of chili powder or spoonful of sugar, all require five or fewer ingredients. It's proof positive that cooking a delicious Indian meal from scratch doesn't have to be complicated or take hours in the kitchen!

To demonstrate just how easy it is to pull together a lovely meal in short order, I made a chicken dish that never fails to please; a single-ingredient bread; a spicy-tangy green chutney; and raita, a popular condiment made of thick yogurt mixed with grated raw cucumber. If you're organized, the meal takes about a half hour, start to finish.

Indian spice blends traditionally are made with many different spices to create a variety of flavors and aromas, so they can be costly to make at home. Thankfully, they're also easy to find prepackaged in any Indian market or on Amazon.

Roti Flatbread

Makes 12

Also known as atta, chapati flour is a finely milled whole wheat flour used to make soft, pliable Indian flatbreads like these classic rotis. For a homemade substitute, mix 1 cup whole wheat flour and 1 cup all-purpose flour.

- 10 1/2 ounces chapatti flour, plus extra for dusting

Put flour in a bowl and slowly add 7-8 ounces of water (not all at once). You want to add a little and mix before adding more.

Once you have a nice soft dough, knead for 1 minute, then cover and let it rest for at least 15-20 minutes. This is key to getting nice, soft rotis.

Divide rested dough into 12 portions. (I made 8 portions.) Use a rolling pin to roll out each one on a floured work surface into a thin disc 6 or 7 inches in diameter.

Heat a frying pan until hot. Cook each roti on one side for a few seconds. Once you spot a few bubbles forming, turn it over. After a few seconds, turn it back over and press gently with a spatula – this will help it to puff up. Once it's ready, brush with some ghee or melted butter, and serve.

Coriander Chutney

Makes about 1 cup

This is a very popular chutney that goes well with any snack, dinner or starter. It takes just a few seconds to blitz and keeps in the fridge for up to 4 days.

I used jalapeno peppers for a gentler heat, but you can adjust it up (or down) to your preference.

- 1 ounce fresh coriander (cilantro), leaves and stalks
- 1/4 ounce fresh mint leaves
- Juice 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons plain yogurt
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 2 green chiles, stems removed (and deseeded if desired)

In a food processor, blitz coriander, mint, lemon juice, yogurt and chiles along with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon sugar.

Don't be tempted to add water to this – let it blitz with just the ingredients above to achieve the right consistency.

Raita (Cucumber Yogurt)

Makes about 2 cups

This lovely cooling dish takes some of the heat out of spicy rice dishes and curries. I used a seedless English cucumber.

- 1 whole cucumber, grated
- 10 1/2 ounces plain yogurt
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 green chile, thinly sliced

Put the cucumber on a plate and sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt. Let it sit for 15 minutes.

In a bowl, mix yogurt with chili powder, sugar and ground cumin.

Squeeze the excess water from the cucumber (I used a clean dish towel), add the flesh to the yogurt and mix well.

Sprinkle chile slices on top and serve.

Yogurt Chicken

Serves 4

The shopping list for this entree is a little longer than the other recipes. But we're not counting salt and chili powder as ingredients in this easy and familiar chicken dish, which is best served with warm roti or plain rice.

Tandoori masala spice mix is easy to find in any Indian grocery. To make it from scratch, mix 4 tablespoons coriander seeds, seeds from 8 green cardamom pods, 8 cloves, 3 tablespoons chaat masala and 2 tablespoons chili powder.

- 9 ounces plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoons tandoori masala spice mix
- 8 skinless, boneless chicken thighs, each cut into 4 pieces
- Oil, for frying
- 4 onions, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons ginger and garlic paste

Put yogurt in a bowl with salt, chili powder and tandoori masala and mix well.

Add chicken pieces and turn to coat them well. Cover and leave to marinate for 1 hour or overnight in the refrigerator.

Heat 2-3 tablespoons oil in a large, deep frying pan, then add chopped onions. Cook over medium heat for 8-10 minutes until deeply golden.

Add ginger and garlic paste and cook for 1 more minute, then add marinated chicken along with its marinade and mix well.

Cover and cook over low heat for 15 minutes. Uncover pan and continue to cook over a high heat for 10 minutes.

Turn off heat and let it sit for a final 10 minutes before serving.

All recipes provided by "Chetna's 5-Ingredient Indian" by Chetna Makan.

Photo provided by Metro Creative

ENTERTAINMENT

COMMENTARY

Success of *'Backrooms,' 'Obsession'* sends a message to Hollywood

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News (TNS)

On the Billboard 200 albums chart dated Jan. 11, 1992, Nirvana's "Nevermind" unseated Michael Jackson's "Dangerous" at No. 1, marking a generational shift, a symbolic changing of the guard, the moment when the '90s truly arrived and a new era dawned for not only the music biz, but for culture at large.

A similar earthquake hit the Hollywood box office over the weekend. "Backrooms," a creepy horror movie based on a piece of internet lore, opened at No. 1 and grossed a jaw-dropping $81.5 million, while "Obsession," an out-of-nowhere, word-of-mouth horror smash, grossed $27.4 million in its third frame, up 14 percent from the weekend prior, which itself was up 39 percent from its opening weekend.

In third place was "The Mandalorian and Grogu," the latest "Star Wars" adventure, which tumbled 69 percent from its opening weekend and finished with $25 million. And yes, in this analogy "The Mandalorian and Grogu" is Michael Jackson, the monolithic megastar that represents the corporate establishment and the status quo, and together "Backrooms" and "Obsession" are Nirvana, the bratty upstarts kicking down the doors and waking everyone up to the fact that there's a new voice, and a new sheriff, in town.

"Backrooms" and "Obsession" are both made by 20-something filmmakers – 20-year-old Kane Parsons and 26-year-old Curry Barker, respectively – who got their starts posting to YouTube. Both movies had minuscule budgets ($10 million for "Backrooms," $750,000 for "Obsession") compared to typical Hollywood productions. And their success flies in the face of conventional Hollywood wisdom, which is to keep pumping out More of the Same, and hope that people buy in.

There are many lessons to be learned from their joint successes, and just as many wrong lessons that should be avoided. But there's no doubt that together they mark a revolution happening in real time, and suddenly it smells like teen spirit all over again.

From YouTube to Hollywood

Parsons and Barker join a YouTube horror wave that kicked off earlier this year when YouTuber Mark "Markiplier" Fischbach's "Iron Lung" opened to $18.2 million at the box office, on its way to a $50 million worldwide gross. "Iron Lung's" success shocked Hollywood, but not fans of Markiplier, who had followed his filmmaking trajectory for years and joined him on his journey from YouTube into movie theaters.

Same goes for fans of Parsons and Barker, who knew them from their YouTube work and were ready to port over into theaters when the time came.

This image released by A24 shows Chiwetel Ejiofor in a scene from "Backrooms."
A24 via AP

That connection forged online between creator and follower is sacred and gives fans a feeling of early investment. Yes, Parsons and Barker are Hollywood newcomers, but they come with a built-in audience.

"Obsession" doesn't star anyone you've heard of, but its premise is universal. It's about a guy (Michael Johnston) who has a crush on his friend (Inde Navarrette) but doesn't know how to tell her, so he makes a wish that she'll be obsessed with him. When that wish is granted, he learns the hard way the old lesson of "be careful what you wish for."

It's a familiar, oft-riffed-on tale, but told in a fresh way and executed extremely well. And what really works in "Obsession's" favor is it plays well with an audience, the kind of experience that is best felt in a packed room. It's why it's doing gangbusters with crowds.

"Obsession's" audience might have started with Barker's established fans, but it has spread well beyond. Generally speaking, movies tend to lose roughly half their audience from week to week, and anything less than a 50 percent erosion is considered a success. It is insanely rare that a movie's box office grows from one weekend to the next, let alone increases two weeks in a row. For a wide release comp to "Obsession's" growth, you'd have to go all the way back to "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" in 1982.

The secret sauce here is word-of-mouth, the oldest marketing tool in existence. In a world based on prerelease hype, teaser trailers and all sorts of other attention-engineering gimmicks, few modes of marketing are more effective than word-of-mouth, someone you know telling you, "you have to see this." It's what fueled the success of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" back in 2002, and giant word-of-mouth hits are so rare that "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" is still used as the modern example of the form.

"Backrooms" is a harder sell, although its prerelease hype was deafening. It stars two people (Chiwetel Ejiofor and Renate Reinsve) whose names most people can't pronounce, who are familiar mostly to indie crowds. (Ejiofor – "Edge-EE-oh-four" – has racked up a ton of credits over the last two decades, but might be most familiar to casual movie fans from his role in the holiday staple "Love Actually.")

It's about a down-and-out furniture salesman who finds a portal to a strange world of endless fluorescent-lit and oppressively yellowing rooms, which are like empty showrooms in an infinitely repeating abandoned department store. It's a nonlinear head trip which is widely open to interpretation, as opposed to the structured, straightforward and easy to digest "Obsession."

But there's room (no pun intended) for all types, which is what their dual success shows. And either would have been impressive success stories in their own right, but the fact that they're happening at the same time – the two movies combined for $109 million at the box office over the weekend – make them a phenomenon at least, a movement at best.

A beginning, not an end

Change doesn't happen overnight, and this doesn't mean that Hollywood as we know it is dead, just as Michael Jackson getting kicked from the top of the charts didn't mean the end of the King of Pop. (See "Michael's" $850 million-and-growing box office gross as an example.) Summer will still be ruled by franchise titles and sequels, and the coming weeks will see the release of "Toy Story 5" and the latest "Spider-Man" movie, not to mention "Supergirl," a new "Minions" title and an "Avengers" adventure by year's end. Familiarity at the movies isn't going anywhere.

But the left field success of these two movies, unknown properties to most until recently, does question the traditional thinking of bringing to life, say, "Masters of the Universe," which opens in theaters this coming weekend, alongside a reboot of the "Scary Movie" franchise. Who, really, was asking for a "He-Man" movie in 2026? And if it underperforms – as it is very likely to – expect that question to turn into an echo.

It also doesn't mean that horror is a quick answer to everything, or that all YouTube filmmakers should be given the keys to Hollywood's castle. Last fall, YouTuber Chris Stuckmann made his feature debut with "Shelby Oaks," a horror movie that was little-seen and didn't in any way alter the business. It earned $8.1 million worldwide, fine for a movie with a reported budget of around $1 million, but it didn't have Hollywood claiming to have found the next big thing.

"Backrooms" and "Obsession" will likely lead to copycats, just as the arrival of Quentin Tarantino in the early 1990s gave birth to a whole genre of movies about fast-talking, pop culture-riffing criminals. Some will be good, most will be bad, and a center will emerge.

But what is true about the success of "Backrooms" and "Obsession" is that it's being led by young people, the very crowd that Hollywood has been decrying for years for supposedly not caring about the movies. Maybe it's that they just haven't been catered to in the right ways, and they don't want to see the umpteenth iterations on franchises their parents and grandparents grew up with. Give them something new and exciting, and they'll show up in droves.

Or maybe it's just that they're saying, "Here we are now, entertain us," and someone is finally listening.

MOVIE REVIEW

Amazon MGM Studios / TNS

From left: Roboto (Kristen Wiig), Man-At-Arms (Idris Elba), Adam (Nicholas Galitzine), Teela (Camila Mendes) and Cringer in "Masters of the Universe."

Nicholas Galitzine the He-Man for the job in *'Masters of the Universe'*

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

What if He-Man was just a goofy guy? That's how the new, ironically self-aware "Masters of the Universe" reimagines this paragon of 1980s cartoon masculinity, and there's only one actor who could simultaneously fill out that leather harness, rock a feathered bob and tackle the comedic task at hand – Nicholas Galitzine.

The British hunk has the aristocratic pretty-boy good looks to have played at least two princes so far ("Cinderella," "Red, White & Royal Blue"), and has proven his comedy chops and willingness to play against type ("Bottoms"). Director Travis Knight puts the unique abilities of his star to the test in "Masters of the Universe," which follows Adam, the Prince of Eternia (Galitzine), as he makes his way home and steps into his power – the power of Grayskull, of course.

"Masters of the Universe" started as a collection of action figures from Mattel (an attempt to make up for missing the boat on "Star Wars" toys). Comic books soon followed, then a 1983 animated series that captured the attention of every Xennial child across the nation, and then a 1987 live-action movie starring Dolph Lundgren as the muscle-bound blond hero. But every intended audience member of 40-something nostalgic nerds probably already knows this lore and then some.

Writers Aaron and Adam Nee, Chris Butler and Dave Callahan (Alex Litvak and Michael Finch have story by credit) modernize this retro tale and bring a layer of self-reflective humor to the He-Man origin story, while director Knight brings the high camp fantasy spectacle. It's all soundtracked to a Daniel Pemberton score that is pure hair metal homage – Queen guitarist Brian May even contributes the Sword of Power theme. This is from the 1980s and don't you forget it.

After an extended prologue set on his home planet of Eternia, young Prince Adam (Artie Wilkinson-Hunt) is sent into hiding in his mother's hometown of Oklahoma City after the evil Skeletor (Jared Leto) and his hag Evil-Lyn (Alison Brie) stage a violent coup. Adam takes the Sword of Power with him for safekeeping, but immediately loses it.

> **'Masters of the Universe'**
>
> ★★ ½
>
> **MPA rating:** PG-13 (for sequences of violence/action, some suggestive material, and language)
>
> **Running time:** 2:12
>
> **How to watch:** In theaters June 5

He then spends the rest of his adolescence telling anyone and everyone about Eternia, the superhero types who populate it, and the sword he needs to get back home. He just can't be content in his drab life working in corporate human resources, living with a roommate (Christian Vunipola), and going on Hinge dates. He sighs at the drudgery of "woke" workplace practices and gets frustrated with nerds. How can he find satisfaction on Earth when he's so far from the masculine utopia of Eternia?

It is a genius turn for the movie to make He-Man such a, well, loser. Galitzine is willing to be the butt of the joke and play with audience expectation, and he nails Adam's exasperation and physical ineptitude. When his old friend Teela (Camila Mendes) arrives on Earth in her nifty spaceship to scoop up Adam and the sword, she exclaims, "what's wrong with you?"

Soon enough he'll be enjoying the Power of Grayskull, which is mostly a spray tan, blowout and gladiator skirt, but also supercharged strength, too. Galitzine looks surprised and delighted every time he lands a punch or kick with his new body. As He-Man, he is all golden quads and shiny biceps, as is required of the character, but would it have killed them to photograph that hard-won physique with a little more oomph? The girls and the gays would like to gaze too, Mr. Knight.

But this is a new kind of He-Man, for a new millennium, not just eye-candy and homoerotic tension with Skeletor (though Leto preens fabulously as the villain). The character has ventured to Earth before, in the 1987 movie, but it's probably the first time that Adam has brought some of his HR lessons back to Eternia. "We're going to ideate on an escape strategy," he tells his rough-and-tumble allies in a "seminar" before he leads them into battle against Skeletor's army. Yes, it's funny, but it's Adam's empathy and humanity – his "human resources," if you will – that make him the ideal vessel for the power of Grayskull, according to the Sorceress (Morena Baccarin).

The new message is nice, but the most crucial element is the carefully calibrated tone, of light irony and deep reverence, which will appeal to Gen X and elder millennials, who have developed a nostalgic, yet winking appreciation for the material. Raunchy humor will sail over the heads of younger viewers, but the supporting cast, including Idris Elba, Kristen Wiig and Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson, are on the same page. One only wishes they might have pushed the camp factor further, as it feels a bit restrained at times. However, it's Galitzine's performance that will win you over – he's truly got the power.

MOVIE REVIEW

The eerie *'Backrooms'* is a doorway into a new kind of spellbinder

By AMY NICHOLSON
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Hollywood has been waiting for Kane Parsons since the year he was born. The 20-year-old director is the same age as YouTube's first videos and grew up with no barriers between his creativity and an audience. "Backrooms," his debut feature, marks the start of a new new wave of filmmakers raised by internet feedback who are ready to reinvigorate the industry.

Young Steven Spielberg screened his 8mm reels for his neighborhood. Parsons uploaded his early shorts online where he could analyze the mass response. When one, an unsettling nine-minute experiment about a warren of dingy carpets, taffy-yellow walls and gridded drop ceilings clicked with 78 million viewers, he made sequels. A24 offered Parsons a deal before he finished high school. He's graduating into multiplexes having spent his adolescence writing, directing, editing, composing and market-testing what people want to watch. I'd toast to that, but Parsons isn't old enough for Champagne.

Given that backdrop, "Backrooms" would be one of the year's most significant releases even if the movie itself was merely fine. But it's better than fine – it's a work of honest-to-goodness art. Working with screenwriter Will Soodik, Parsons has gone back into that banal maze to find an uncannily mature story about loss and stagnation, about how our self-serving narratives barricade us from emotional growth.

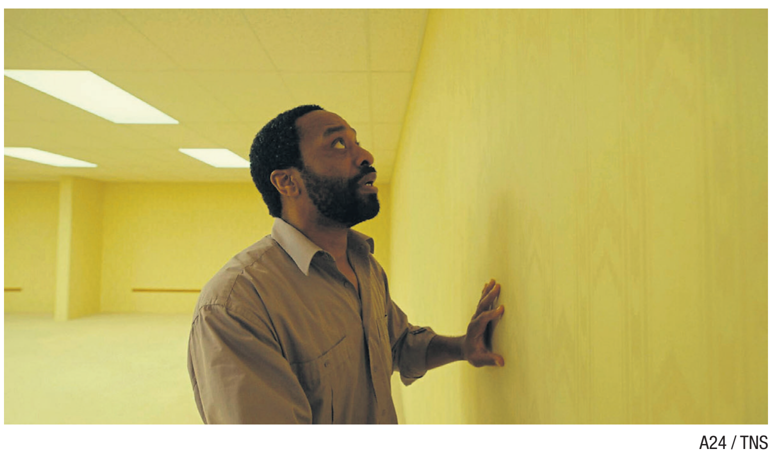
Set in 1990, "Backrooms" has the fritz of an old VHS tape. (Like so many other Gen Z kids, Parsons is nostalgic for a pre-smartphone era he never knew.) A failed architect-turned-furniture salesman named Clark (Chiwetel Ejiofor, superbly expressive) tumbles through a portal in his store's basement to the backrooms of the title – less Alice in Wonderland, more Alice in Wonderbland.

> **'Backrooms'**
>
> **MPA rating:** R (for language and some violent content/ bloody images)
>
> **Running time:** 1:45
>
> **How to watch:** In theaters

"It's like it was made by a bunch of construction workers on acid," he muses. The hallways lead to more hallways, the overhead fluorescents whine like hornets. Someone – or something – has piled lamps and stools into the center of one room, scattered chairs in another and embedded shoes into the floor as though the ground were made of sand. The disorder looks like the wreckage of an unknown chaos. Aboveground, Clark is trapped in his own resentments, throwing temper tantrums like a toddler. Down here, frustration feels natural.

Should he be afraid? And if so, then what of?

Distant thuds warn that Clark isn't alone. Soon after, three other characters follow Clark into this liminal space: his loud employees Bobby and Kat (Finn Bennett and Lukita Maxwell) and his exasperated therapist, Dr. Mary Kline (Renate Reinsve), who is haunted by flashbacks of her agoraphobic mother. There's also a mysterious man in a lab coat (Mark Duplass) who works for a company that factors into the backrooms' preexisting internet lore, but doesn't have much purpose in this script. It's fine just to see Duplass as a gesture toward corporate apathy. More beings will appear too and cinematographer Jeremy Cox's deliberately low-fi look forces you to do triple and quadruple takes to comprehend what you're even seeing.



A24 / TNS

Chiwetel Ejiofor in the movie "Backrooms."

How does a 20-year-old fathom adult-sized discontent? Lord knows, but Parsons does. One theory is that today's 20-year-olds were just launching into teenhood when the pandemic teleported them from their classrooms to isolated computer screens. Meanwhile, they overheard their parents fret that society might be forever hollowed out. When a young person looks toward the future, what do they see? Probably not an office building bustling with entry-level jobs.

Think about how the act of buying a couch no longer involves interacting with a salesman like Clark, but peering at a pixelated living room that doesn't actually exist with a couch that changes colors at a tap. Think about how lately the internet at large feels human-less. Then layer that emptiness over the images here.

Sparse yet gripping, "Backrooms" and its minimalist story accommodate the audience's own free-ranging imagination. The infinite size of these drab catacombs triggers sense-memories of feeling small and confused in an ordinary place that feels all wrong. It's a time travel trip back to childhood – mass entertainment made intimate – with Parsons tossing us scraps of Clark and Mary's personal histories like a breadcrumb trail. I remembered what it felt like to get lost in a motel on a road trip with my grandparents. More recently, I tidied the home of a friend who was in the hospital, the pill bottles and crumpled blankets left in situ as evidence of someone else's pain. "Backrooms" felt like that, too.

There's an incredible special effects shot where the camera sinks through the floor of Mary's living room to find a mutation of the same room – and then another and another – each replica deteriorating further from reality until it becomes a new room altogether that would fit right into the backrooms. This, we wordlessly understand, represents how memories of the past can be at once factually inaccurate and emotionally true. We've all been bewildered kids, Parsons more recently than most. Some of the most powerful people on Earth still behave like they're stuck in that headspace.

Describing "Backrooms" as a horror film doesn't feel exactly right. It's a surrealist painting in motion, the equivalent of staring at Salvador Dali's wasteland of melting clocks until it makes gut-sense. Dali made that famous masterpiece, "The Persistence of Memory," in 1931, a breath-holding moment between wars when daily life looked normal enough but vibrated with the dread that no, things were definitely not OK. Kids don't know that, but they vibe with Dali anyway because he keys into their suspicion that the world doesn't really obey the rules.

That anxiety hums through "Backrooms." It's why millions of people watched and shared the original short. Yet as fraught as it sounds – and as abruptly as it ends – I left elated. A major new moviemaking talent has arrived and he's the beginning of a movement. Other internet-honed young filmmakers will follow with their own fresh insights into genres like action, comedy and romance. Kane Parsons is just the first one through Hollywood's labyrinth.

The life of a showman

Barry Manilow on cancer, coming out and cosmetic surgery

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times
Barry Manilow performs at the Clive Davis Pre-Grammy Gala at the Beverly Hilton on Feb. 1, 2025 in Beverly Hills, California.

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — Barry Manilow steers a golf cart to the end of a long driveway, pulls to a stop and flings a plush toy goose across a manicured lawn to the delight of his two Labrador retrievers.

"OK, where we doing this?" the 82-year-old singer asks about our interview. Dressed in a khaki shirt and slim-fitting rust-colored trousers, he's got the look of a man prepared to undertake some très chic brush clearance; in reality, he's motored down here merely to answer questions about his fabulous life and career.

Manilow and his husband and longtime manager, Garry Kief, moved to this sprawling desert estate from Los Angeles in the late 1990s. "We kept coming out, and it's so beautiful that eventually we said, 'Screw it – let's just stay,'" he says. By then, Manilow had long since established himself as one of music's premier showmen, with a Grammy Award, 11 Top 10 hits and a storied 15-night run at L.A.'s Greek Theatre under his belt.

So you might've taken Palm Springs as a sign that he was ready to slow down. Instead, he launched a residency at the Las Vegas Hilton in 2005 that eventually surpassed the length of Elvis Presley's show there; in 2006, he released "The Greatest Songs of the Fifties," which went platinum and spawned a series of successful follow-up albums.

In April, Sabrina Carpenter interpolated a bit of Manilow's iconic "Copacabana (At the Copa)" into her headlining set at Coachella just days before he was honored by the American Advertising Federation for his work writing commercial jingles. The range of those achievements said something about his blend of music-nerd craft and pop-star razzle-dazzle.

"Barry loves music as much as anyone I've ever known," says Bette Midler, who hired Manilow as her pianist for the name-making gig she played at New York's Continental Baths in the early 1970s. Performing, Midler adds, "isn't a job with him – it's a vocation, a calling."

Yet now that calling faces a threat. In December, Manilow announced that he'd been diagnosed with lung cancer and that surgery would require him to postpone a number of concert dates; five months later, he has yet to return to the stage – the longest break, COVID-19 aside, he can remember taking in decades.

Fortunately for Manilow, he has a new album, "What a Time," with which to occupy himself. Due June 5, it consists mostly of original material – his first such LP in nearly 15 years – though it opens with a sumptuous rendition of Peter Allen and Dean Pitchford's "Once Before I Go." Manilow notes proudly that the song, which was produced by Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, recently made Billboard's adult contemporary chart, extending his run on that tally beyond the half-century mark.

Still, performing is clearly on his mind as he leads me into a tile-roofed gym equipped with weights, a treadmill and a massage table. Manilow has been working out here every morning, he says, to regain the strength needed for his show; he's got Vegas dates on the books for July but admits he's unsure whether they'll happen or not. We settle into two leather club chairs, his dogs Jake and Abby at his feet.

"Please be brilliant," he tells me. "Don't be boring."

Q: What are you doing on a day you're not working?

A: Working.

Q: I see.

A: Since the surgery, I can't go on the road. Ninety minutes of screaming in tune, which is what I do for a living – I'm not up for that yet. I will be, but it's taking a long time to get my voice back. They warned me that I'd have to learn to breathe again. So these days, I get up, I go to my piano and I try to be creative. Before I know it, the afternoon's over.

Q: Was the diagnosis a shock?

A: Imagine your doctor saying, "You've got lung cancer."

Q: Fair enough.

A: I'll tell you the story. I have terrible hips – bursitis and everything – and they hurt so bad that I thought maybe I broke a bone or something. So I asked my wonderful family doctor, I said, "Can you just do one of those MRIs and see?" Now, before that, I'd had two bad bouts of bronchitis, one after the next. Have you ever had bronchitis?

Q: I have.

A: It stinks. So I asked him if he could check my hip, and he told the guys that were doing it, "Why don't you check his lungs?" And I think he might have saved my life because they found a big black thing in my chest. One doctor said it was probably remnants of the bronchitis, the other doctor said it could be cancer. I voted for the bronchitis. But they went back in to see and it was a cancerous tumor.

Q: How'd you react?

A: When they told me, I was on the road, and I just went back to sound check. What else could I do? I never thought cancer would get me – it wasn't in the cards. They wanted to get rid of it as soon as possible, so we made a deal: I'd finish the couple of weeks of shows that I had, then I'd go to the hospital and they'd remove it. It was supposed to be a no-brainer – it hadn't spread yet, thank goodness. But then my AFib kicked in and acid reflux kicked in and pneumonia kicked in. They rushed me to the ICU for seven days.

Q: Sorry to be morbid, but were you close to death?

A: They said at one point – I didn't hear them say this but I heard that they did say it – "We don't want to lose him." It's all a total blur now. When they finally brought me back to my lovely room at the Eisenhower [medical center], I weighed 128 pounds.

Q: How long you figure it had been since you weighed 128 pounds?

A: I don't remember ever being 128.

Q: You said you never thought cancer would get you. Why?

A: I'm too busy. Pretty stupid. What I realized is that I've always been the leader – leader of the band, leader of an audience – but I wasn't the leader of this one. That was a big lesson for me. I had to rely on everybody else. Nurses, doctors, friends – you should see some of the notes people have sent.

Q: What's it been like to be offstage for so long?

A: Agony. Make an album, go on the road, come back, make an album, go on the road – that's what my life's been for years. And I like it. Now I just have to get better and do what the doctors are telling me. It's the only way out.

Q: Well, there's one other way.

A: I'm not ready to croak. But I wasn't ready to stop performing either, and it just went like that [snaps fingers]. The day before surgery, people are screaming, standing ovation, band sounds great. Next day I'm packing to go to the hospital.

Q: Are you working with a vocal coach?

A: Yep. But I get winded just walking down the hallway. I turn on my old records and sing along, and three songs in I'm like [pants].

Q: Could you do a show where you skip the uptempos? No "It's a Miracle" or "Copacabana"?

A: I'm trying ballads too – my ballads end big.

Q: Are you allowed to smoke or drink?

A: I stopped smoking many, many years ago. I vape but hardly – I just like holding it. I was a great smoker. Brooklyn in the '50s? Please. I started smoking when I was 9. I got up to three packs of Pall Mall non-filters a day, and it never bothered me – never had any problem breathing. I was just a skinny piano player who smoked. That's who I am. That's who I was.

■■■

Before he was a skinny piano player, he was a skinny accordion player.

Manilow grew up poor in Brooklyn, the only son of a Jewish mother and an Irish father who split up right after he was born. As a kid he entertained his mom and his maternal grandparents by squeezing out the Jewish folk song "Hava Nagila"; later, his stepfather brought home records by Gerry Mulligan and Judy Garland that opened his mind to jazz and pop.

He says today that he never saw himself as a performer – he wanted to write, arrange, produce. His first success came with jingles for brands like State Farm – "Like a Good Neighbor" is his handiwork – and Band-Aid.

"My ideas were good for pop music because of the commercials," he says. "The rules are pretty much the same – you need to grab the listener as soon as possible. For a commercial, you've got about five seconds. For a pop song, you've got 10."

In 1971, Manilow got the job with Midler and ended up working on her million-selling debut, "The Divine Miss M," which led to a deal of Manilow's own with Clive Davis' Arista Records. Despite Manilow's insistence that he was a behind-the-scenes guy, he scored a No. 1 hit out of the box with the plaintive "Mandy," then quickly followed that with another chart-topper, "I Write the Songs" – a pop-philosophical epic, as nobody's tired of pointing out ever since, that Manilow didn't actually write.

Bruce Johnston, who wrote "I Write the Songs" – and won a Grammy for song of the year thanks to Manilow's recording – says the key to Manilow's performance is that "he's never too cool for school." A Beach Boy for six decades until he retired from the band this year, Johnston adds that Manilow's rendition of the song, which was also cut by Captain & Tennille and David Cassidy, "is the only one I care about, honestly. He really grabbed it – he's just as real as he could be."

After several more Manilow hits – "Tryin' to Get the Feeling Again," "Weekend in New England," "Looks Like We Made It" – Davis asked the singer to produce a would-be comeback album by his latest Arista signing, Dionne Warwick. Warwick's initial reaction to that idea: "Really?" she says with a laugh. "Did Barry Manilow really know anything about Dionne Warwick? As it turned out, he knew quite a bit," adds Warwick, who recalls turning up for their first session to discover that Manilow had laid every one of her albums on his piano. "He was letting me know: I know you," she says.

"Dionne," the album they made together, went on to win a pair of Grammys and spun off silky hit singles including "Deja Vu" and "I'll Never Love This Way Again" that reinvigorated Warwick's career and helped solidify Manilow's standing as a kind of soft-rock auteur.

Which isn't to say that rock's intelligentsia ever viewed him kindly. Though his best music finds an emotional truth in over-the-top theatrics, critics routinely dismissed Manilow as a lightweight or a schlockmeister; even now, he seems an unlikely candidate for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, where he's been eligible for induction for decades.

Manilow, who entered the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2002, insists the slights don't bother him. "I've never been one of the guys," he says. We've been talking for a while, and because of the bursitis, perhaps, he's hoisted one of his legs over the arm of his chair. "I don't think about awards and parties and stuff like that. I'm very lucky – I live in the most gorgeous place I've ever seen and I have the most wonderful partner that you can imagine. I'm grateful he's chosen to share his life with me. We've been together for over 46 years, and we still laugh and we still love each other. That's the greatest award I'll ever get."

Manilow and Kief married in 2014; the singer came out as gay three years later. (Manilow was briefly married to his high school girlfriend, Susan Deixler, in the mid-1960s.) Has he found that the world looks at him differently since he came out?

"It was a non-event. Nobody gave a s---," he says. "They all knew. I never really hid it, but in the '70s and '80s, that would have killed the career, and I didn't want to do that. So I just never talked about it." He smiles.

"Garry and I are just two guys that live in a house on a hill with two dogs that we love."

■■■

Like many of Manilow's hits, "Once Before I Go" was Davis' idea.

Allen, the late Australian entertainer portrayed by Hugh Jackman in Broadway's Tony-winning "The Boy From Oz," had played the tune for Manilow in the early '80s. "And I loved it," Manilow says now. "But I was too young to sing a song like that – that song needs age to be able to pull it off honestly."

Davis first suggested that Manilow perform it in his set at the post-pandemic We Love NYC concert that Davis put on in Central Park in 2021. After the show, which was called off due to weather as Manilow sang "Can't Smile Without You," Davis repeatedly advised the singer to record it.

"I don't know, he had a bug up his ass," Manilow says. "He loved it, and he loved it for me. And I'm not even on his record label anymore – he's just a friend at this point. But he was right once again."

Given the cancer diagnosis, did Manilow worry that fans might interpret the song – a teary goodbye from a well-wishing lover – as a more permanent farewell?

"Not one time has anybody said, 'Is he talking about dying?'"

You wouldn't necessarily call "What a Time" a concept album, though many of the songs ponder the ways memory and history can shape a romance. Manilow knows he's regarded as a singles act but says that putting together LPs is what he's always enjoyed best. His favorite is 1984's jazzy "2:00 AM Paradise Cafe," on which he collaborated with Mulligan, Sarah Vaughan and Mel Tormé.

"That was one where the critics who'd been killing me, they didn't know I was capable of doing something like that," he says. "But frankly, I'd been surprised that I was capable of doing the pop stuff."

Q: You made records of hits from the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. Why'd you stop before "The Greatest Songs of the Nineties"?

A: Were there songs in the '90s?

Q: Barry.

A: Didn't it start to go downhill?

Q: I can think of a handful of classics by Whitney Houston alone.

A: You can't touch those. I'm a good arranger, but you can't top those records. Maybe four of those albums was enough. I was ready to go back to writing.

Q: You've said the problem with modern pop is that there's no melody anymore.

A: That's what I miss. Clive's been pushing me to do "The Great New American Songbook."

Q: Like he did with Johnny Mathis a few years ago.

A: So I've been studying the Top 20. The one I like is Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars.

Q: "Die With a Smile."

A: Love that. But the way they're writing songs these days is not the way I know how to write songs. They don't do a verse, a chorus, a bridge, a chorus, a big ending. To me, when I listen, the songs feel like run-on sentences.

Q: I was trying to think of artists older than you who are still performing.

A: Name me one.

Q: Willie Nelson.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Johnny Mathis.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: Frankie Valli.

[Rolls eyes].

Q: You're invoking the widely held assumption that he lip syncs.

A: I loved Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. Who didn't?

Q: Would you ever lip sync?

A: I'm terrible at it. I try now and again.

Q: Do you find it morally objectionable?

A: Depends on the artist. I like being in the moment, not knowing what's gonna happen in the next bar or at the ending. It's exciting to me to see if I can make those high notes.

Q: Would not being able to make them mean it's time to hang it up?

A: Well, what's happening right now, I'm on the verge. But I'm getting stronger, so maybe I don't have to hang it up yet. I look fantastic, but I'm a hundred years old, right? I don't know how that happened, by the way – I don't get Botox or anything.

Q: You've had no work done?

A: No! I must say: There was one time when we lived in L.A. that I did do a face-lift. But after that it's just been a little here, a little there.

Q: Wait, I asked you –

A: "Work" is like a face-lift, and I only had one of those. The rest of it – I see something falling down, sure, I'll do that. I'm as vain as anybody else. One of my old friends, his mother said, "I always knew he was talented, but when did he get so handsome?"

BOOKS

What Dave Eggers wishes he had known when he was young and cool

By CHRISTOPHER BORRELLI
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

There's a remarkable interview with writer Dave Eggers, published in the Harvard Advocate in 2000, just after he turned 30, which is about the time you stop worrying if you're cool. It's since become quasi-iconic among the cool, a kind of proclamation against the tyranny of cool and the hipster and the fear of selling out. In 2000, Eggers, Lake Forest native, novelist, memoirist, founder of McSweeney's, was an avatar of literary cool, the kind of whom an interviewer might earnestly ask: "Are you taking any steps to keep (expletive) real?" Which is exactly what Eggers was asked in that interview. Twenty-six years later, his response is a fascinating portrait of an artist no longer a young man, unwilling anymore to keep years of self-consciousness in check.

Create, don't dismiss, he says. ("Oh, how gloriously comforting, to write someone off.")

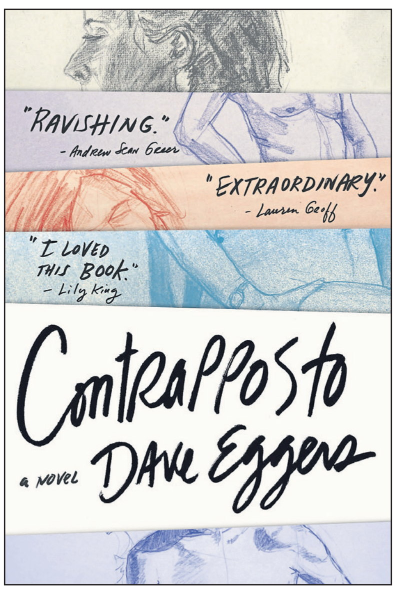
And whenever an artist disappoints you, save the bridge-burning dismals. He wishes he had. ("Any band that sold 30,000 albums was a sellout … and (expletive) if I don't wish I could take all that back – because I knew nothing then, just as you know nothing now.")

He remembers his "orange-carpeted bedroom" on the North Shore, where he read about cutting-edge artists: "I thought I had my ear to the railroad tracks of avant-garde America." Now he just wants his interviewer, wondering if he takes steps to stay cool, "to look back on this time as being a time when those words came out of your mouth."

He's annoyed, mean and honest.

I mention this because Eggers, who is now 56, and appearing on June 10 at the Old Town School of Folk Music, as part of the Chicago Humanities Festival, has a new novel, "Contrapposto," his finest in years, about being young and living in Chicago, completely absorbed in culture. His hero, Cricket, an art student, is surrounded by other artists. Except he's modest, casual – he sounds nothing like the pre-millennium Eggers.

"Actually, Cricket is drastically different from anyone I even know," Eggers said the other day, by phone from his home in San Francisco. "I went to art school at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and the American Academy of Art, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and even as a kid I had a lot of training (in visual art) – it was always something I loved to do. I was interested in people like (Cricket), artists who have talent but can't make a living in doing what they're good at. And yet I don't think Cricket regrets the path he takes. He knows himself, he knows the bliss he feels when he's drawing is 99.9 percent the point. He is in love with just creating art, the meditative quality of painting and drawing, but he is also unskilled or, I suppose, unwilling to acquiesce to the rules and the guidelines and the conventional wisdom of the art world."



Knopf / TNS

If you go

What: "Dave Eggers: Contrapposto"

When: 7 p.m. June 10

Where: the Maurer Concert Hall at the Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: chicagohumanities.org

Cricket, in other words, is Eggers in that interview, clear-eyed, almost optimistic.

"Contrapposto" is a rare thing, a smart book about the joy of being creative and open to everything, and finding an apartment in Chicago, and settling into a group of friends, and just making stuff, every day, because you absolutely must. Tucked in there, at its heart, is also a friendship that spans a lifetime, between Cricket, who comes from a small Indiana town, and Olympia, an art-school friend who comes from money and moves comfortably through the business end of the art world, the galleries, the dealers.

The title comes from an art-class pose, a model slightly tilted, with more weight on one foot than the other, hips going one way, shoulders going another. He wanted Cricket and Olympia to pair that way, as two parts of the same body, leaning into each other.

At 826 Valencia, the San Francisco-based creative writing center he co-founded in 2002 – which expanded into nine additional writing centers across the country, including the longtime 826Chi, a partner-in-residence at the Steppenwolf Theatre – as you enter, there's a famous quotation from Toni Morrison fixed to a wall: "If there's a book that you want to read but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." Eggers said it's taken him decades to take that advice, which he's been offering writing students for decades.

"And it's funny because 'Contrapposto' has been in my mind forever, since my early 20s. I suppose there was never an art-world novel that spoke to my experience. I mean, at 56, you realize how little changes in your body and soul. I have friends in their 80s are at their most vital and curious and social and searching now. With every decade, you can grow a little calmer in your perspective – the day-to-day tremors matter less."

Abel Uribe / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Writer Dave Eggers signs several books for a fan during a book signing at the Book Cellar on Feb. 2, 2013.

He was a painting major at UI for three semesters but ended up with a journalism degree. "Actually, I changed majors five times at UI, starting out with English, but there were classes I couldn't get into unless I declared a major, and so I would work the system, and change my major to get into the classes I wanted – it was so bureaucratic. And semesters cost $1,200 then, so there was less risk to experimenting. I could pay tuition with lawn-cutting money, which is what I did. And by working at the Daily Illini (the UI student newspaper), which paid us so well that I think I actually left school financially ahead, you could get $74 dollars for a 200-word record review! In the early 1990s."

"The solitary nature of painting couldn't compete with the excitement of a newsroom," he said. Eventually, he settled into publishing (McSweeney's), wrote an acclaimed memoir ("A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius") and made an eclectic career of nonfiction ("Zeitoun") and fiction. "The Circle" (2013) and "The Every" (2021), two of his best-known works ("The Circle" was adapted into a 2017 Tom Hanks film), are set in the Bay Area tech world, where he has called home for years. Yet Eggers still writes on a desktop computer, unconnected to the internet, that he bought in 1998. He said the pro-AI billboards of Northern California are more dystopian than anything he could write.

He also never really stopped painting and drawing.

About 15 years ago, he began showing work in galleries. "What's weird is people don't realize you work on a deadline, as in a newsroom. There's a show a month away and they need 20 new pieces – I love the urgency. It's pure bliss. And I get to do it without a sense of obligation. Like, well, could we sell some drawings? In the basement (of 826 Valencia), we have a print studio, we put out a new piece every week, it helps pay the rent on the building. There's something so simple to it. It's what you'd want if you're creating something. There's not 20 layers between your work and an audience.

"It's what Cricket and maybe Olympia and maybe you too are seeking with creativity – you want it to stay fun. There is no reason why any part of the art world should be anything but enjoyable. When it's miserable and anxious, it feels like such a paradox of all the ways to live. If you're making art and you're miserable, that's a lost opportunity."

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, May 23, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. The Ballad of Falling Dragons. Sarah A. Parker. Avon
2. Ironwood. Michael Connelly. Little, Brown
3. Yesteryear. Caro Claire Burke. Knopf
4. A Parade of Horribles. Matt Dinniman. Ace
5. Our Perfect Storm. Carley Fortune. Berkley
6. The Calamity Club. Kathryn Stockett. Spiegel & Grau
7. 26 Beauties. James Patterson. Little, Brown
8. Starside (deluxe ed.). Alex Aster. Avon
9. Broken Dove. Dani Francis. Del Rey
10. The Kings' List. Jade Presley. Red Tower

Hardcover nonfiction

1. Liar's Kingdom. Andrew Weissmann. Little, Brown
2. The Joy of Money. Carrie Joy Grimes. Harper Business
3. Strangers. Belle Burden. Dial
4. All American Patriotism. Rachel Campos-Duffy. Harper Influence
5. Suicidal Empathy. Gad Saad. Broadside
6. This Is Me. Hayden Panettiere. Grand Central
7. The Mission Generation. Gupta/Fewer. Wiley
8. Birth Vibes. Jen Hamilton. Grand Central
9. The Power of Positive Habits. Jon Gordon. Wiley
10. Ignite Revival. Kathryn Krick. Charisma House

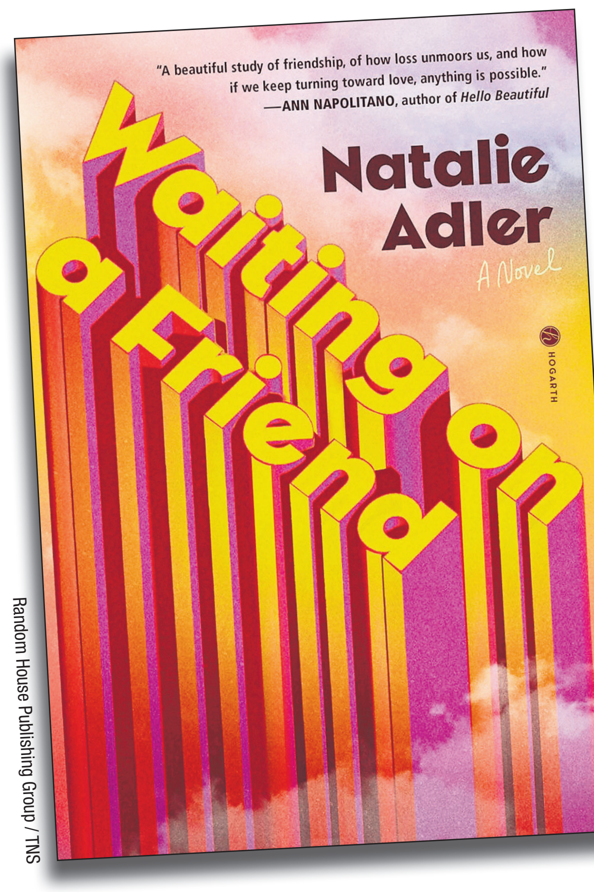
Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. Fever Dream. Elsie Silver. Atria
3. Dungeon Crawler Carl, Vol. 1 (graphic novel). Matt Dinniman. Vault
4. Score. Kennedy Ryan. Forever
5. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
6. Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 30. Gege Akutami. Viz
7. The Knight and the Moth. Rachel Gillig. Orbit
8. The Daisy Chain Flower Shop. Laurie Gilmore. HarperCollins
9. Great Big Beautiful Life. Emily Henry. Berkley
10. Game On. Navessa Allen. Slowburn

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

She sees ghosts – what can they teach her about grief?



Random House Publishing Group / TNS

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

'Waiting on a Friend" is Natalie Adler's first novel but, already, I'd argue she can do what greats like Ann Patchett, Patrick Ryan and Celeste Ng do.

Their novels don't fit in any genre but they are both substantive and a breeze to read, have something to say but also lots of humor and feature compelling characters but are driven by those characters actually doing things (i.e., a plot). They're novels that you – well, I – whip through faster than you might like but that leave plenty to think about afterward. Adler is more profane than those other writers and has a more anarchic sense of humor, but I tore through "Waiting" and then regretted that she doesn't have more books I can read. So far.

Adler conveys such a strong sense of time and place in "Waiting on a Friend" that it's tempting to think the novel is autobiographical. But it's set in New York's East Village in the mid-1980s, when I suspect Adler was not yet born. Still, there's something uncannily dead-on about her gritty descriptions, plentiful needle drops (the title is borrowed from the Rolling Stones hit; Adler posted a playlist, full of period songs by Sylvester and New Order) and keen sense of the love/hate relationship her characters have with the pain-filled world they live in.

Maybe the most impressive thing about Adler's book is how accurately she captures the atmosphere of unknowing created by the early days of HIV: "[W]e read that anyone could get it through a blood transfusion. Rewind a few months and they had said it was something only gay men got through sex. You can see how it's hard to keep the timeline straight, what we knew when."

Renata, a 29-year-old lesbian, is the main character, and the book matter-of-factly accepts something about her: She can see dead people. The era in which Renata lives charges that ability with extra pathos because AIDS is killing many of her loved ones. In fact, her best friend and former roommate Mark has just died and, although Renata is ambivalent about the ghosts she encounters, she desperately wants Mark to appear and help her resolve some things.

Passionate and crabby, Renata is a strong cup of coffee and an entertaining narrator, as in this description of why she's weirdly perfect for her job at a vintage shop: "Not knowing what was in fashion made me perfect for the job, because no matter what the customers chose, I had enough disinterest on my face to make them want to impress me."

She's also a relatable character because, although most of us don't see ghosts, she's trying to figure out things all of us wonder about: What do we owe the dead? How does grief work? Are there healthy ways to prepare ourselves and our loved ones for the inevitable?

It's not always clear if the ghosts are helping Renata with these questions but Adler makes it clear that she has figured out a few things, as in this bit of hard-won intelligence: "I didn't really learn how to grieve after my mother died – you just hurt and hurt and eventually someone asks you what you want for dinner and the rent is due."

"Waiting on a Friend" is not perfect. It leans too hard on musical references, and a lovely scene in which Renata sees ghosts on a dance floor loses some of its power if you note its similarity to the finale of the movie "Longtime Companion." But it's a terrific read and an exciting promise of more to come.

AUTOMOTIVE

General Motors' Tech Center still future-focused after 70 years

By SUMMER BALLENTINE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Photos by General Motors / TNS

View overlooking Design West, the Design Dome, and viewing yard. **BELOW:** View inside the Design West studio space and vestibule.

Seventy years after the opening of the General Motors Technical Center in Metro Detroit, company President Mark Reuss says GM's "nerve center" plays an even greater role at the automaker now.

Roughly 25,000 people are currently employed there – the most of any white-collar GM site despite a series of layoffs – as part of an intentional decision by leadership to encourage speed and collaboration in design, Reuss said in an interview with The Detroit News.

"It's the first time that we've really had the most of the company concentrated in one place," he said. "Remember when we had divisions? They were in Lansing. They were in Flint. They were in Pontiac. Everything now is on-site, which is really important from a speed and innovation standpoint."

The 710-acre campus in Warren is more than twice the size it was when it opened in May 1956. The site, designated a National Historic Landmark in 2015, has been so influential that GM took inspiration from the Tech Center when designing its new corporate headquarters at Hudson's Detroit.

"The company has gone through a lot of different reorganizations over many, many years, as you would expect to remain competitive," said Reuss, who began his GM career as an intern in 1983. "But I think it always has been the nerve center of innovation for us, and I think it still is today, even more so maybe than when I started."

Hailed as "where tomorrow meets today," "where the future is created" and "the Versailles of industry," the Tech Center's reputation has been focused on innovation since its inception, said Warren Browne, an auto supplier consultant and former GM executive who worked at the carmaker for 40 years.

"The Tech Center was about the future, and still to this day it's about the future rather than anything that has to do with today," Browne said. "If you wanted to know about what was going to happen at General Motors two or three years down the road, you went out to the Tech Center."

The site is the birthplace of 20th-century inventions ranging from seatbelts to mechanical hearts. Today, GM tests self-driving cars on roughly 38 miles of road on campus, and researchers there study new battery chemistries to power electric vehicles.

"The cell chemistries that are being developed there in R&D are small cell forms that we can actually take across the railroad tracks on the campus and validate, and then we can learn how to construct them in our new manufacturing facility for cells," Reuss said.

The Tech Center's former cafeteria has since been remodeled as Cadillac House, where wealthy buyers custom-design the handmade Cadillac Celestiq they will drive. Making the ultra-luxury vehicle requires additive manufacturing on campus, Reuss said, another advantage in speed of design.

The closeness of craftsmen, designers and engineers at the Tech Center allows the company to go from "math data design into physical properties extremely quickly," he said.

"That's a huge competitive advantage," Reuss said.

The Tech Center's origins

Before the Tech Center, "everything was designed or put together" at the GM Building off Grand Boulevard in Detroit, said automotive historian Robert Tate with the Motor Cities National Heritage Area.

The Tech Center was former Chairman Alfred P. Sloan's brainchild, said Tate, who worked in GM's archives in the 2000s. He said pressure from rivals such as the flashy 1940s Studebakers pushed GM to dig deeper into design to remain competitive.

"We invented car design," Reuss said. "We invented the clay model. Those types of things are big, and it started with the color studios and then has blossomed into a real competitive advantage in terms of going to market with different brands and different designs."

Construction began in 1945, Tate said, and finished in 1955. President Dwight Eisenhower spoke via a closed-circuit television during the opening ceremony May 16, 1956, according to the historian.

Famed architect Eliel Saarinen drew up initial plans for the project and after his death in 1950, son Eero Saarinen, whose designs include the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, created the final design of the campus, which features an aluminum-clad design dome used to mimic natural light for checking the look of vehicles during development.

The finished Tech Center site originally spanned more than 300 acres, according to Tate. Some of GM's most popular models were born at the Tech Center, where engineers and designers were, and are, surrounded by iconic sculptures and classic midcentury modern furniture.

"General Motors dominated the industry when it came to design in 1960s with the Pontiac GTO, with the Cadillacs and things like that because of their design features," Tate said.

AUTO REVIEW

Impossible to ignore, hard to explain: the 2026 Toyota Crown

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Toyota / TNS

2026 Toyota Crown Platinum

Base price: $54,990

Powertrain: 2.4-liter turbocharged engine and dual electric motors

Horsepower/Torque: 340/400 pound-feet

EPA fuel economy (combined): 30 mpg

Length/Width/Height: 194/72/61 inches

Ground clearance: 6 inches

Cargo capacity: 15 cubic feet

Payload: 979 pounds

Towing capacity: 5,000 pounds

If the 2026 Toyota Crown sedan proves anything, it's that when it comes to design, Toyota buyers will tolerate absolutely anything as long as it starts every morning and doesn't frighten their accountant. The old Avalon may have been dull, but at least it looked like a proper flagship sedan. Its replacement, the Crown, looks like a design compromise reached after several uncomfortable meetings.

The result is a car that appears to be having an identity crisis. Too tall to be sleek, too sedan to be an SUV, from most angles it looks like it's wearing orthopedic footwear. And although it looks as if it should be a hatchback, it's not a hatchback. It's a fastback, one that looks as if it pulled a hamstring in Pilates.

The front end doesn't help. The grille is large and oddly shaped, managing the rare trick of being neither elegant nor aggressive. It's simply there, like a confused facial expression rendered in plastic. Add the optional, and on the Platinum mercilessly unavoidable, two-tone paint scheme and any pretense of design cohesion goes out the window. Instead of visually lowering the car, the contrasting roof slices the Crown into awkward, stacked layers, like a sedan that got dressed in IKEA shelving and Crocs.

From the rear, the Crown develops full-blown identity issues. It wants the elegance of a liftback, the stature of a crossover, and the dignity of a traditional sedan, yet it ends up having none of them. It's the automotive equivalent of wearing a tuxedo jacket, hiking boots and yoga pants: technically dressed, spiritually confused.

And yet, the 2026 Toyota Crown sedan seems almost intentionally divisive.

It does not seek universal approval. Instead, it stands out precisely because it refuses to blend in, and there is a certain appeal in driving something that doesn't look like everything else at your condo. For some buyers, that will be refreshing. For others, it will feel like a collection of interesting ideas that never signed the same lease. The Crown demands a reaction, and in the Toyota universe, that alone makes it radical.

Inside, however, the revolution ends. There is little here to suggest this is meant to be Toyota's top-drawer sedan. Materials are acceptably unremarkable, even in Platinum trim, and the overall execution feels carefully budgeted rather than confidently luxurious. Toyota may have been aiming for modern and sporty; instead, the cabin lands somewhere between sensible and forgettable, especially when compared to the genuinely creative interiors now coming out of Hyundai and Kia, which must make Toyota executives wake up in a cold sweat at night.

Still, the Crown's tall stance does pay dividends when it comes to entry and exit. Getting in and out is easier than in most sedans, which makes this less a flagship and more a concession to knees.

One genuine bright spot is the new 12.3-inch infotainment touchscreen, running Toyota's U.S.-designed interface. It is a massive improvement over the old mouse-based system, which felt like it was designed by someone who actively disliked humanity. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto come standard, along with Bluetooth, Wi-Fi for up to five devices, Qi wireless charging, USB-A and USB-C ports, and a 12-volt outlet. In other words, it finally behaves like a car built in this decade.

Most Crown models use Toyota's fourth-generation hybrid system, pairing a naturally aspirated 2.5-liter four-cylinder with electric motors and a CVT for a total of 236 horsepower. Performance is adequate rather than inspiring: 0–60 mph takes 7.6 seconds, but fuel economy is excellent at 42 mpg city and 41 mpg highway. Most buyers will find this perfectly satisfactory.

Things get genuinely interesting with the Hybrid Max powertrain, which pairs a 2.4-liter turbocharged engine with electric motors on both axles and a six-speed automatic. Output jumps to 340 horsepower, 0–60 mph drops to 5.7 seconds, and suddenly for the first time, the Crown feels like it belongs in the conversation. Fuel economy falls to 29 mpg city and 32 mpg highway. But for a large, heavy sedan, those numbers remain respectable. More importantly, refinement improves dramatically.

Even so, the Crown never quite delivers any driving enjoyment. It's quiet, comfortable and composed, all classic Toyota virtues. But there is little incentive to push it. All-wheel drive is standard, and the infotainment system is finally competitive, but neither is enough to elevate the experience beyond competent.

Like its predecessors, the Toyota Crown sedan is capable, comfortable, reliable … and oddly proportioned. What makes the Crown remarkable isn't whether you like it or not. It's that Toyota, long the undisputed champion of bland competence, has built something this divisive. You may question it, mock it, or grudgingly admire it, but you will not ignore it. And for Toyota, that's radical.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Father's Day gift ideas

By GREGG ELLMAN • Tribune News Service (TNS)

Father's Day is right around the corner, and this is the perfect time to find a gift that reflects your dad's personality, hobbies or everyday needs. If you're drawing a blank, here are some great suggestions.

ibreo / TNS

The ibreo N5.

The **ibreo N5 mini S3 Neck and Shoulder Massager** ($63.99) is a must-have, producing endless hours of relaxation. There is no wrong atmosphere for it; at home, at work or at play, it all works. The wearable, backpack-style, hands-free massager with six massage heads for provide broader coverage, is perfect for use while sitting at your computer, watching TV or just lying down.

It is adjustable with back straps and pull handles for use on your neck and shoulders. There are four massage modes (kneading, master, scraping, and mixed), three intensity levels, and a choice of two heat settings, all controlled with easily accessible buttons or with the included handheld remote control. It's lightweight, portable and quiet with a 10-minute timer and a long-lasting USB-C rechargeable battery, good for 15 massages before a charge is needed.

https://ibreo.com/products/ibreo-n5-mini-s3-neck-and-shoulder-massage

Olight / TNS

The Olight ArkPro Ultra.

Olight's Baton 4 Pro ($69.99) dual-switch, high-lumen, compact EDC flashlight is amazingly bright for its 4.37-by-0.9-inch size. It has a 6061 aluminum body, a secure anti-slip grip, and an IPX8 waterproof rating. Inside is a high-performance LED and a 3,500 mAh battery, charged via the magnetic charging cable or USB-C. What makes it amazing is that it delivers 1,600 lumens with a 200-meter throw.

The **ArkPro Ultra** ($129.99) one-piece rectangular-shaped flashlight combines 1700 lumens of Pure Flood, 800 lumens of spotlight, 365nm UV light, and a green beam. The floodlight is considered your everyday use flashlight. With the spotlight, it will shine farther away, and the UV light will show you stains, leaks and other glowing effects. They shine independently, except for the green beam, which can be used with the other light sources. It has a body made of O-Aluminum and a portable size of 4.88 by 1.06 by 0.63 inches. Inside is a 2,000 mAh battery that also charges via USB-C or the included magnetic charging cable.

https://www.olight.com

Leatherman / TNS

The Leatherman MICRA.

Leatherman's MICRA ($49.95) compact multi-tool is a perfect example of big things coming in small packages. The 2.5 by 0.75 by 0.37 inch/1.8-ounce tool (when closed) can be carried on its own or attached to a keychain. Either way, it provides 10 tools in total, including a stainless steel knife, tweezers, spring-action scissors, and a screwdriver. There's also a 4.7-inch ruler, a bottle opener and a built-in nail file/cleaner for personal care. It's available in a variety of dual-tone colors.

https://www.leatherman.com/products/micra

Fender / TNS

The Fender Elie 12.

As promoted, you'll have to warn your neighbors when you crank up the **Fender Elie 12 portable speaker** ($399). You get serious sound from 120 watts (there's also a 60-watt model at $299) of booming, crystal-clear sound from the 360-degree listening speaker with built-in subwoofers. You'll get 15 hours of listening on the go before a charge is needed; a quick 15-minute charge provides two hours of playtime.

Producing the Elie 12's sound are two full-range drivers, two tweeters and two subwoofers. Once you turn it up, you'll hear how it's one of the best portable speakers available. It can be used wirelessly (Bluetooth) or wired. There's also a 3.5 mm auxiliary line-out on the eye-catching speaker, which features a carrying handle. An XLR/1/4-inch combo jack allows for plugging in a guitar or microphone.

On-board controls are there for the mode, sound and volume. Modes include single or stereo; purchase multiple Elie 12s and link them together. It's available in black or white.

https://fenderaudio.com/products/elie-12

VIOFO / TNS

The VIOFO A229.

The **VIOFO A229 Ultra 3CH dash cam** ($369.99) features front and rear 4K cameras and a full HD interior cabin camera, all powered by high-quality Sony STARVIS 2 sensors. The sensors help provide crisp video, high-quality nighttime video, and license plate readability. The front and rear cameras have an F/1.8 aperture and a 140-degree field of view. The interior camera has an f/2.2 lens with a 210-degree ultra-wide fisheye field of view.

Other features include a 2.4-inch high-resolution display, various time-lapse settings, parking mode, built-in WiFi, Bluetooth and GPS. A USB-C 2.0 port provides a simple, direct, high-speed connection. Voice control lets you start recordings and other features with your command. The installation is pretty straightforward to get you recording in a few minutes. Video is recorded in MP4 format, and still images are in JPEG format.

https://www.viofo.com/products/viofo-a229-ultra-w-3ch-4k-front-4k-waterproof-rear-camera-1080p-fisheye-cabin-camera

The **AeroFit 2 Pro earbuds** are the first dual-form earbuds from Soundcore. They are designed for a variety of uses, including those who want an open ear to hear their surroundings (while running, biking, etc.) and more private, isolated listening. The emphasis behind the new design is not to replace in-ear ANC earbuds, but rather to offer an option with noise reduction in an open-ear form factor.

After a month or so with the AeroFit 2 Pro ($179.99) in a variety of indoor and outdoor conditions, there was a short learning curve, but after a few days, its value shone through. The playtime is rated at 7 hours in open-ear mode and 5 hours in ANC mode. The portable storage/charging case extends both. They are available in black, purple, white, and blue.

https://www.soundcore.com/products/a3875-aerofit-2-pro-open-ear-earbuds-with-anc

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

The AeroFit 2 Pro.

Soundcore / TNS

What exactly does your firewall do?

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This week we tackle another reader question, "I'm still confused and often aren't sure whether or not to allow my firewall to disarm. And does it reinstate alone or what should I do next?"

A firewall is a security system that monitors your computer's network traffic and decides what to allow or block based on rules.

Generally, you should only disarm your computer's firewall temporarily – typically for troubleshooting and you should turn it back on when you're done. Keeping the firewall disabled leaves you exposed.

Turning off a firewall might be done if you find yourself blocked from accessing the internet. Turning off the firewall is one of the basic troubleshooting steps to figuring out what's going on.

If you do find the firewall is blocking internet access – for all, or even one application – you then need to change one or more settings to allow the traffic you want, but then reinstate the firewall to keep unwanted traffic out.

After troubleshooting, your firewall will not automatically turn itself back on after a specific amount of time.

Also note, you may have multiple firewalls. Windows and Mac operating systems have a firewall, but so does your Wi-Fi router. If your home internet service provider gave you a combination modem/router, it has a firewall

You probably interact with your computer's firewall more often than you realize.

On my Mac, if I download an app from a source other than the Mac App Store, I'll get a popup telling me I've downloaded a program from the internet and asking if I'm sure I trust it. When you install an app on your computer, you're giving that app permission to run and your firewall will then allow traffic to and from that app.

If you launch an app that finds it can't get to the internet, it may ask you to allow the firewall to let the traffic through.

If you'd like to see which apps on your computer are allowed through the firewall, you can check the list.

On Windows 11, the list is in Settings > Security and Privacy > Windows Security > Firewall & Network Protection.

On MacOS go to System Settings > Network > Firewall > Options.

Both of those places will let you add specific apps through the firewall.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

TECH REVIEW

Some robots just want to clean your floors

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I can remember testing my first robot vacuum. It was amazing to watch, and I really thought we were living in the future.

I soon learned it didn't have much in the way of onboard intelligence and it just ping ponged around the room until it decided it must have covered everything or it needed a battery recharge.

My, how times have changed.

I've been testing the new **Eufy Robot Vacuum Omni S2** ($1,599.99, eufy.com), and I can't believe how technology has advanced.

I've been doing the testing, but after the initial setup, my 87-year-old mother-in-law has been reaping the benefits, as it's up and running at her house. My wife's mom still lives at home, and we don't want her pushing her heavy vacuum around, so a robot vacuum is a godsend.

Features

The Omni S2 is a great floor cleaning system that mops and vacuums, effortlessly switching cleaning methods depending on the floor surface.

The S2 features 30,000 Pa AeroTurbo 2 suction with 100 air-watts of cleaning power for great suction on hard floors and carpets. It is fun to watch it transition from tile to carpet – the wheels will raise up the entire robot depending on how tall the carpet is.

The run cleaning brush is actually two tangle-free brushes with a slight gap in the middle that lets dirt and hair spin toward the middle and into the dust collection cup.

The mopping system features a full-width roller mop with HydroJet self-cleaning that cleans the mop head as it's cleaning. The base station electrolyzes the water for more hygenic mopping.

The rolling mop and the rotating side brushes actually can extend out from the body to get up close to walls and into corners.

When the vacuum is full, or the battery gets low, it'll return to the base to empty the dirt and dirty mop water and do a deep clean on the mop head while the battery recharges. If it hasn't finished it's cleaning task, it'll take off again once it's charged up. When the robot is on the base, the roller is being cleaned with 140 degree water and dried with hot air. Dirty water is offloaded and clean water is refilled. It's like a NASCAR pit stop.

Eufy has also built in a fragrance dispenser that freshens the air as it works. It ships with three fragrance pods. You can buy more, along with the cleaning solution that comes in a specially shaped bottle that snaps into place.

Setup

This is a substantial system to set up, but it only took about 15 minutes to get it ready to charge.

The base is packed with foam padding that holds the smaller parts in place and the robot is inside its own box.

Once you read the instructions and lay everything out, it all makes perfect sense and assembly is a snap. The base is taller than any I've tested, but it needs to fit the dust collection bag as well as clean and dirty water tanks and a status screen so you can see what's going on.

The dust collection bag comes pre-installed and a bottle of the mopping solution is included, but don't pour it in; the bottle dispenses from its spot inside the base.

The base platform that the vacuum sits on to charge has a small ramp that guides the wheels into place, and there are molded spots for the wheels to roll into to make sure everything is in place.

You place the robot on the base to charge up before the first use.

The app and mapping

You have to download the app and use it to connect the S2 to your home's Wi-Fi network. The setup was easy to follow and worked as it should.

Once the S2 is online, you are walked through some settings to tell it about your house and how you want to clean it.

The S2 needs to get the lay of the land before it can begin cleaning, so you'll start by creating a map. To do this, you'll press a button on the app and the robot will take off on a mapping run that just moves from room to room, making a map of rooms and even your furniture. This is the time to open all the doors of the rooms you want it to clean.

When it finishes, you'll see the map and the rooms it has discovered. You can name the rooms, which is handy if you want to set up specific room cleaning tasks later.

You can edit the map to set up no go zones to keep the robot from places you'd like it to avoid.

The map is constantly being updated as the robot makes each cleaning run. If you leave a door open to a new room, the robot will take notice and add it to the map.

Cleaning

I just had it map the whole house and then begin cleaning. You can schedule tasks, like whole house cleaning or you can break it up into smaller tasks with specific rooms or groups of rooms.

Depending on the size of your home and the amount of mopping, you can let the robot run unattended for a few days until the clean and dirty water tanks need filling and emptying.

The S2 is smart enough to raise up the mop to avoid getting your rugs wet.

If you're not using the mop, you can just let the robot vacuum for weeks before you need to check on how full the bag is getting. The app will let you know if there is anything that needs your immediate attention.

I need to specifically mention the robot's intelligence – it can see if area rugs in your home have tassels on the ends. Tassels are a weak spot for vacuums, as they tend to get caught in the rollers and bring cleaning to a halt. It is smart enough to start cleaning tasseled rugs from the middle and avoid rolling over the tassels entirely.

I can't believe how easy it is to keep your home clean with the Omni S2. Vacuuming and mopping is great when a robot is doing the work.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

Eufy / TNS

Eufy Robot Vacuum Omni S2.

HOME&GARDEN

Handout / TNS

Replace builder-grade fixtures with those that are more elevated and modern. Builder grade flush mount fixtures tend to feel lower end as opposed to help to elevate a space.

Incorporate consistent lighting throughout the home.

DESIGN RECIPES

MODERN LIGHTING TIPS

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

When it comes time to sell your home, lighting is one of the key elements that stands out. Most potential buyers embrace not only natural light but fixtures that are modern and up-to-date.

Lighting is one of the most overlooked yet most impactful elements of attracting a potential buyer to your home. Fixtures that are modern and new help to make a home feel open and airy, while outdated or overly personalized fixtures may make a home feel tired and worn.

If you're looking to put your home on the market, here are some top lighting tips to help make your home feel modern and fresh.

Do

1. Do replace builder-grade fixtures with those that are more elevated and modern. Builder-grade flush-mount fixtures tend to feel lower-end.

2. Do choose clean, modern silhouettes. Look for streamlined pendants, simple chandeliers and minimal sconces that feel current but not trendy.

3. Do select classic finishes as opposed to those that are overly personalized or trendy. Matte black, brass and brushed nickel remain popular with potential buyers.

4. Do focus on key areas. These include the entry, dining area and kitchen. These are often the areas that potential buyers see first and play a key role in making a strong first impression.

5. Do incorporate consistent lighting throughout the home. While it is not necessary to stick with the same style of lighting in every room. The overall style should be consistent throughout the home for a cohesive look and feel.

Don't

1. Don't keep outdated track lighting. Track lighting is one of the least desirable styles of lighting and instantly dates a home.

2. Don't use overly personalized fixtures. While this may work in particular spaces such as children's rooms, in general overly personalized fixtures will be a turn off for potential buyers.

3. Don't mix too many finishes. Too many competing metals throughout a home can feel disjointed, so keep finishes consistent and intentional.

4. Don't ignore size and scale. Fixtures that are too small disappear, especially in large spaces, while oversized fixtures can overwhelm.

5. Don't overlook lighting color and temperature. Sometimes this is a matter of preference; cool lighting can make a home feel more minimalist and sterile, while warm lighting can help a space feel warm and welcoming. The key is to be consistent.

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TOP RIGHT: Select classic finishes as opposed to those that are overly personalized or trendy. Matte black, brass, brushed nickel, remain popular with potential buyers. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Focus on key areas. These include the entry, dining area and kitchen. These are often the areas that potential buyers see first and play a key role in making a strong first impression.

Scott Gabriel Morris / TNS

What should homeowners know before roofing problems start?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

Your roof is easy to forget about – until something goes wrong. But by the time you notice a leak or water stain, the issue has often been building for months, if not longer. The key to avoiding major roofing headaches is understanding what to look for early and staying ahead of problems before they start.

First, know the expected lifespan of your roof. Asphalt shingles, the most common roofing material, typically last 15 to 30 years, while materials like metal, tile or slate can last significantly longer. But age alone doesn't tell the full story. Weather exposure, installation quality, ventilation and even nearby trees can all impact how quickly your roof wears down. If your roof is approaching the later years of its lifespan, it's especially important to be proactive rather than reactive.

Just as important is recognizing early warning signs that something may be off. From the ground, look for missing, curling or cracked shingles, dark streaks, or patches that appear uneven. Inside your home, subtle signs like musty odors, peeling paint near the ceiling, or faint water stains can point to a roofing issue before a major leak develops. These small signals are often easy to dismiss – but catching them early can make a significant difference in both cost and scope of repair.

I experienced this myself when I noticed a small water spot on my bathroom ceiling. It turned out to be a leak near a roof vent, and because I caught it early, the repair only cost about $150. Left unchecked, it could have become a much bigger – and more expensive – issue.

Routine maintenance is one of the simplest – and most effective – ways to prevent issues. At least once a year, take a few minutes to visually inspect your roof from the ground. Keeping gutters clean is critical, as clogged gutters can cause water to back up under shingles and lead to damage. Trimming overhanging branches helps prevent debris buildup and reduces the risk of impact during storms. These small, consistent habits go a long way in protecting your roof.

It's also wise to schedule periodic professional inspections, especially after severe weather. A trained pro can identify issues that aren't visible to the untrained eye, such as compromised flashing, small leaks or ventilation problems. Addressing these early is almost always more affordable and less disruptive than waiting until repairs become urgent.

When it comes to costs, prevention is far more manageable than emergency fixes. Minor repairs handled early may cost a few hundred dollars, while more extensive damage can quickly climb into the thousands. A full roof replacement is one of the larger investments homeowners face, so extending the life of your current roof through maintenance and early intervention can have a meaningful impact on your long-term budget.

Your roof is your home's first line of defense against the elements. A little attention now – before problems start – can help you avoid stress, protect your investment and keep everything underneath it safe for years to come.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Dreamstime / TNS

Regular roof inspections, especially by a professional, can help catch small issues early before they turn into costly repairs.

Neyya / Getty Images

10 travel trends that will shape summer 2026

By MIA TAYLOR
TravelPulse (TNS)

Summer 2026 will be the season of "fluxury."

Not familiar with that term? Neither was I until I began researching this story, and it seems that sky-high oil prices (triggered by the American and Israeli attack on Iran) will play a significant role in how consumers plan their summer getaways this year.

Travelers far and wide have apparently realized they're going to have to make sacrifices this summer in order to indulge in a getaway, and "fluxury" will be one of many workarounds.

"Rather than choosing between all-out luxury and strict budget travel, travelers are going to be more flexible and creative with how they spend their vacation, mixing high and low," says Tara Cappel, founder & CEO of FTLO Travel, a travel company for solo travelers in their twenties and thirties.

What will that look like exactly? Travelers, for example, may splurge on one standout or high-end hotel for their summer vacation while opting for simpler accommodations for the remainder of their getaway.

Alternatively, they may spend big on once-in-a-lifetime experiences like safaris, cooking classes, or Michelin-star dining while keeping other expenses in check, continues Cappel. "This allows travelers to reach bucket-list destinations and take longer trips without overspending, making aspirational travel feel more attainable," Cappel explained.

Ok, so fluxury is a thing. But what else can we expect during the hazy days of summer this year? Read on to find out what the experts have to say about how summer travel 2026 is shaping up.

Northern escapes aka coolcations

Climate change continues to be a real thing (despite many still denying it). And as global warming has progressed, historically popular summer destinations across Europe have heated up. In response, many travelers are looking elsewhere for their summer escape.

"Travelers will still want to travel to Europe in July and August, but to escape the heat will head north to the Nordic countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden," says Cappel.

Nordic destinations have been gaining attention among travelers over the past couple of years and, as a result, have gone from well-kept secrets to trendy Euro summer hotspots (not that kind of hot), especially the fjords of Norway, Denmark's bustling capital, Copenhagen and Sweden's cozy fishing villages, notes Cappel.

But it's not just Nordic destinations that benefit from this trend this summer. Canada and the Pacific Northwest in the United States are becoming more popular now than ever, says Jesse Neugarten, founder and CEO of Dollar Flight Club.

"At Dollar Flight Club, we've been tracking deals to Halifax, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Calgary all under $400 this summer," Neugarten explains. "That's cheaper than a lot of domestic beach destinations, and you're getting cooler weather."

"When we pulled together our Summer 2026 report, the overlap between affordable and cool was one of the clearest patterns in the data. People want relief from the heat," adds Neugarten.

Microcations

It seems consumers are (understandably) more price sensitive this year due to the increased price of everything from gas to airfare. As a result, we will likely see an increase in what experts have dubbed "microcations."

This is "due to lower costs associated with these short trips," which still offer a way to get away, Jimmy Yoon, head of points intelligence for the platform point.me, tells TravelPulse.

Short, intentional trips, microcations typically last between two and five days and are meant to provide the emotional and psychological benefits of a longer holiday.

Analog camping

Another new term for summer 2026, analog camping, involves travelers actively moving away from over-programmed vacations and back toward something simpler, the kind of trips they took as kids, says Jenny McCullough, associate vice president of brand growth for Kampgrounds of America (KOA).

"According to our recent Camping and Outdoor Hospitality Report, half of campers say they're likely to plan a trip that relives a childhood camping experience, and that number jumps to 72 percent among Gen Z and 68 percent among Millennials," says McCullough.

There's also a growing appetite for real skill-building, according to that same KOA report: 44 percent of campers want to learn bushcraft skills like fire-making and foraging, with Gen Z leading that charge at 81 percent.

"People are deliberately going against the curated, over-scheduled vacations in favor of something that feels real," adds McCullough.

Drive-to destinations and regional travel

Soaring oil prices strike again. In this case, the volatility of airline tickets and gas prices is inspiring a growing preference for convenience.

"Travelers are increasingly prioritizing regional, drivable destinations," says Jennifer Barnwell, president of Curator Hotel & Resort Collection, which includes properties throughout the United States.

"We're seeing strong demand for properties within a 2-4 hour radius of major metro areas, particularly those offering outdoor access and a distinct sense of place," continues Barnwell.

"Coastal and Southeastern markets are especially well positioned," Barnwell adds, noting that travelers are seeking easy, sun-driven escapes that deliver accessibility, without the complexity of air travel.

Southward shift in Caribbean travel

Among travel advisers who specialize in the Caribbean, the most consistent pattern being identified for the summer ahead is a move away from western Caribbean destinations and toward the southeastern Caribbean. Meaning, islands such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, and Grenada are seeing noticeably stronger demand than in 2025, says Jonathan Patton, Founder, Rivage Travel.

"A primary driver behind this change is how clients are thinking about risk right now," explains Patton. "The effects of Hurricane Melissa [which struck the region in October 2025] are still on our clients' minds, so they're booking destinations largely outside the primary hurricane belt."

This regional shift has given Patton's clients more confidence to book summer travel "without the stress of storm season hanging over their trip," he adds.

Clients who a year ago would have likely gone to Jamaica or even the French Polynesian Islands are now specifically requesting Saint Vincent because it's less developed from a tourism standpoint, and mainly below the hurricane belt

Experience first, destination second

Yet another intriguing development emerging this summer surrounds how travelers are making their decisions. It seems some globetrotters are less likely to start the conversation with "I want to go to this island." And instead are starting their searches based on what sort of experience they're after, such as: "I want to be completely disconnected," or "I want something my friends have not done yet," or "I want a beachfront experience without dealing with a villa rental."

"What we're seeing across the board is a trend line moving towards more intentional travel decisions, where the experience is driving the booking, not the resort," says Patton.

"That shift is changing the role of the advisor," he adds. "Translating what a client wants into the right experience has become even more important than recommending a resort. It means focusing on destinations that deliver something unique, not just a familiar experience in a different location. Those are the ones winning bookings right now."

RV rental renaissance

RV travel is having a moment. Renting an RV is quickly becoming the on-ramp for a new generation of road trippers who want the freedom to go wherever the road takes them without the long-term commitment of buying a vehicle, says McCullough, of KOA.

The company's Camping and Outdoor Hospitality Report reveals that 55 percent of Gen Z say they're likely to rent an RV for a road trip in 2026, and Gen Zers interested in RV travel are twice as likely as Millennials to rent rather than own.

Interest is broad-based, too, with nearly half of all campers and half of Millennial glampers saying they're likely to rent an RV this year.

"For younger travelers, especially, renting is the smarter way to hit the road, chase new destinations, and experience the classic American road trip on their own terms," notes McCullough.

Short-haul flights carry the summer

Europe is expensive this summer, with Paris and Rome running $1,700 to $2,100 roundtrip right now because the cost of jet fuel doubled after the United States and Israel attacked Iran.

Transatlantic routes burn the most fuel per seat, and airlines are passing that cost straight through to consumers. But short-haul flights are a different story, says Dollar Flight Club's Neugarten.

"Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic are where we're seeing consistent sub-$400 roundtrips across the board. Those routes are holding because the flights are short, they burn way less fuel, and they're dominated by low-cost carriers that actually compete on price."

Given these factors, Dollar Flight Club's members are booking Latin America and the Caribbean at a much higher rate than usual this summer. And Neugarten says it makes sense. If a family of four is looking at Europe and airfare alone is going to cost $8,000, flying to Puerto Vallarta for $1,000 total instead is far more appealing.

"The math is pretty straightforward," says Neugarten.

Spirit's collapse reshapes summer pricing

Crushed by soaring jet fuel prices triggered by the Trump Administration's war in Iran, Spirit Airlines shut down on May 2 as the first major U.S. airline to fail in 25 years. And the impact on domestic summer pricing is already showing up.

"Routes where Spirit flew are seeing fares jump 20 percent to 25 percent as other airlines absorb the demand without the same competitive pressure Spirit created," says Neugarten.

"Fort Lauderdale and Orlando were massive Spirit hubs, and those markets are going to feel this the hardest. The $79 flights that Spirit built its reputation on are gone," he concludes. "Frontier, Allegiant, and Breeze will eventually expand into some of Spirit's old routes, but that takes months. Right now, capacity is tighter and fares are going to be getting higher."